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HENRY WINTER

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Henry WINTER
THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Tuchel the right fit for England

Fresh appointment ...Tuchel at his first press conference as England manager

Gareth Southgate started England on a journey, taking the fear out of the shirt and the shootouts, and taking the team close to glory. The Football Association now places vast faith and finance in a finisher, Thomas Tuchel, to complete the journey.

The FA is effectively paying the new England manager £7.5 million to weave his managerial magic over 24 hours. That's the competitive playing time that Tuchel is in charge of the Three Lions for: 16 games split between 2026 World Cup qualifiers and the tournament itself. It's New Jersey for those in a famous old jersey. It's MetLife Stadium or bust for Tuchel.

There's possibly an additional 150 minutes' extra-time, at least four friendlies and all the many hours Tuchel will spend preparing and overseeing training, travelling and checking on players. But the FA's money is deliberately targeted on one very focused individual nailing one prize. One shot. On top of the £7.5m salary over 18 months, there will be one very substantial win bonus, reported to be up to £3m.

Giving a manager a contract for one tournament is a radical change of approach by the FA, and a very sensible one. It concentrates minds, and offers more value for money. Gone are the days when Sven-Goran Eriksson's contract was extended in March 2004 to cover Euro 2008; he left after a disappointing 2006 World Cup with a £5m pay-off. Fabio Capello was given an extended deal on the eve of the 2010 World Cup, England stank South Africa out and he eventually left with a £1m pay-off. The FA has learned expensive lessons.

Everyone heads Stateside in 2026 knowing what's expected: if Tuchel

doesn't win the World Cup, he will have failed, and so will the FA. The odds are against him. England can struggle in the heat and, though they are good, there are some great teams out there – Spain and Argentina for starters.

But you have to admire the FA's ambition. They have recruited an elite manager. Where the FA maintains old habits is in continuing the theme of 21st century appointments being a contrast to the predecessor. Kevin Keegan, all big passion and tactical limitations, was followed by Eriksson, the suave, outwardly placid Swede wooed from Serie A. Eriksson was succeeded by a likeable but limited English coach promoted from No.2 status, Steve McClaren. Then it was on to a European A-lister in Capello, who didn't understand the players, to loveable, occasionally grumpy, old-school Englishman, Roy Hodgson.

Then on to Southgate, a manager more in tune with the players. He's an English diplomat, who took Middlesbrough down and lacked the nous and decisiveness to get England over the line. Tuchel differs majorly from Southgate. He often falls out with people, but he's a serial winner.

Tuchel accepts the FA's challenge, and even appeared to relish the opportunity of putting "two stars" alongside Three Lions on a shirt when speaking to the media at Wembley on October 16. For those of us who covered his sadly brief but very eventful and successful spell at Chelsea, Tuchel was his usual engaging self.

Most of us recall how he succeeded a club legend in Frank Lampard, and won everyone over with his personality, the team's performances including winning the Champions League final in 2021, and then how adeptly he dealt with the fall-out around the owner Roman Abramovich and the sanctions on Russians.

Tuchel walked into the auditorium at Wembley armed with a good line. He played the Pele card. Smart move. "I just had the chance to read a quote from Pele who said that 'Wembley is the heart, the capital and the cathedral of football', and I think he was absolutely right." You charmer, you.

Not since Brandon Flowers of the Killers sang a specially composed medley about "66 and the winning team" under a huge photograph of Bobby Moore in 2013 has a visitor to Wembley played it so well. Tuchel praised the iconic Wembley, extolled Southgate's work, raved about the good collection of playing talents and the fans who create such an atmosphere. It felt like an Oscar acceptance speech.

He didn't get many football questions. I asked Tuchel whether Harry Kane would retain the captaincy. It was an obvious question: if Kane kept the armband then he would start, killing off that debate about his place. Tuchel lauded Kane, talking about him being close to being a "legend" of England. More nods of appreciation.

Tuchel emphasised that his role was very much a "football" one. Good luck with that. The England job will never be just about headers, volleys and whether he can get three No.10s in a starting XI. Tuchel will be asked about footballing politics, player workload and societal issues. It's more than a football job. Southgate handled that side effortlessly. Tuchel has to deal with that and the scrutiny of his private life.

We should really welcome Tuchel. A homegrown manager would have been preferable, but the moment the FA went down this one-tournament track, the options were few. Tuchel's appointment triggered anger in some media quarters. They didn't want a German in charge. Yet imagine if it had been Jurgen Klopp named England manager – there would have been a love-in at Wembley. Klopp is revered by the media and, Liverpool's rivals apart, by many fans because of his charisma. Yet Klopp is as German as Tuchel is. The argument directed at Tuchel lacks consistency.

It is still baffling that the FA did not even sound out Eddie Howe, Newcastle United's English manager. Compensation would have been considerable and the FA may not have wanted to pick a fight with Newcastle's Saudi owners.

Everyone heads Stateside in 2026 knowing what's expected: if Tuchel doesn't win the World Cup, he will have failed, and so will the FA

The FA needed someone who knows their way through a cup competition, and Tuchel does. He is the right choice. England fans can expect a coach who takes tough decisions, leaving out major names in the interests of balance. He will vary his tactics but 3-4-2-1 is an option. England could line up: Pickford; Stones, Guehi, Colwill; Alexander-Arnold, Rice, Gomes, Chilwell; Palmer, Bellingham; and Kane. Tuchel really should have started working on his formation and selections with the November Nations League games, getting to know the players better, but instead he will not start until January 1. When the clock will tick even louder.

Tuchel's right-hand man

Thomas Tuchel brings with him an English assistant in Anthony Barry. That sums up the balance of coaching power: foreign No.1, English No.2. The FA hopes that Barry will one day make the step into management as Tuchel's appointment has highlighted the obstacles in the pathway for English coaches. Barry has a chance, having started early, coaching Accrington Stanley's Under-16s while still playing for their firsts. He learned under Paul Cook at Wigan Athletic, then Frank Lampard at Chelsea before being kept on by Tuchel. Barry gained further experience with the Republic of Ireland, Belgium and Portugal, and he's now left Lisbon for London. Whether he can one day make the step up from No.2 to No.1 remains to be seen.

England coach... Anthony Barry

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

The evolution of "national" teams

International football is not the clash of nations that it was originally intended to be

New England boss ...Thomas Tuchel is unveiled to the media at Wembley

Thomas Tuchel's appointment as England manager resurrected the old question about the purpose and value of a national team. Is it a vehicle for patriotism or nationalism or simply, suiting FIFA's political and development aims, for cash generation? The answer is: all three and more besides. Football's good fortune, more than ever now, is profiting from the emergence and existence of the nation state.

Yet, just as national team football generates millions of dollars hand-in-hand with fixture inflation, so the original concept is devalued.

Once upon a time national identity was more a matter of geography than politics. Then technology expanded horizons in the 19th century. The palaces of empire (Holy Roman, Habsburg, Ottoman, etc.) were duly shattered by the First World War.

The emergent patchwork of nation states perfectly suited the ambition of fledgling FIFA, founded in 1904 in Paris. Borders meant national associations and national associations meant national teams. In due course national teams meant the World Cup, Copa America, Africa Cup of Nations, European Championship, etc.

> The national team concept was about governance off the pitch and competition on it, the best of one state against the best of another

No turning back. The national team concept was about governance off the pitch and competition on it, the best of one state against the best of another. Players at first then coaches, clubs and national teams at the pinnacle of this happily accidental pyramid.

Foreign coaches are nothing new and nothing of which to be embarrassed. They were fundamental to the spread of the game. The British were eager to share their enthusiasm and knowhow. Think Jimmy Hogan in Hungary and Austria, William Garbutt in Italy, Fred Pentland in Spain, George "Sid" Kimpton in France, Charles Miller in Brazil, Alexander Watson Hutton in Argentina and so many others. They were not just football teachers but missionaries, preaching the gospel far and wide.

That pupils should emulate and outstrip their tutors is common to every sphere, with football no exception.

Hence European coaches, following the examples of Hogan and Co., took their knowhow to Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Now their very success is illustrated by the flood of supremely talented footballers flowing back the other way in a world swirling with today's mass movement of peoples.

The initial platform for the reverse flow of players was created by a mix of both European emigration and colonialism.

For example, millions of Italians headed for South America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So, in due course, Italy would benefit in triumphant fashion on reverse emigration.

Azzurri boss Vittorio Pozzo seized quickly on Italian clubs' transatlantic investments. His 1934 World Cup-winning squad included Argentina's Enrique Guaita (Roma), Attilio Demaria (Ambrosiana-Inter), Raimundo Orsi and Luis Monti (both Juventus) plus the Brazilian Amphiloquio Guarisi (Lazio), known in Italy as "Anfilogino" Guarisi. Pozzo responded to critics by pointing out that family forebears rendered the players liable for military service. He said: "If they can die for Italy then they can certainly play football for Italy."

Even fascist *Duce* Benito Mussolini was not complaining.

Italy and Spain shut the doors briefly to foreign players in the 1960s. The *stranieri* were easy scapegoats for failures to progress beyond the World Cup's group stages in 1962 and 1966, but the fault lines lay elsewhere.

Changing countries was not limited to the transatlantic trade. Free-scoring Austrian Josef "Pepi" Bican left Admira Vienna for Slavia Prague in 1937 only for bureaucratic bungling to prevent him playing for Czechoslovakia at the 1938 World Cup. Ultimately, one of the most prolific goalscorers of all time did add 12 goals in 14 games with his new country to the 14 in 19 he had registered with his old.

Colonialism was a post-war vehicle for France and Portugal about which no one batted an eyelid. Just Fontaine, 13-goal record marksman in the 1958 World Cup for France, and "Black Pearl" Larbi Ben Barek had both been born and brought up in Morocco when the North African country was a French protectorate. Another noted "colonial" was the prolific Algerian-born forward Rachid Mekhloufi. Portugal followed the same path by capping players imported by their leading clubs from its African colonies. Benfica, at their peak, boasted Eusebio and Mario Coluna (Mozambique) plus Joaquim Santana and Jose Aguas (Angola).

This quartet featured in Benfica's famous 1961 and 1962 European Cup triumphs, enabling the club to maintain the illusion of lining up "only Portuguese players" until after independence had been conceded in the mid-1970s.

The infiltration of national teams remained comparatively minimal. No one cared. No one was offended. No one's pride was pricked.

Overt nationality switch had been limited in the main to Italy and Spain, while Eastern Europe was communist-secluded and the rest of Western Europe restricted player importation. All this disintegrated in six dramatic years at the end of the 1980s: first came the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia followed by the free-for-all outcome of the Bosman ruling in 1995.

Almost overnight, Europe's richest clubs could plunder the international field while even Europe's poorest clubs, in the old eastern bloc, found the South American and African markets ripe for harvesting of not only established but also youth talent. France even discovered the benefit of immigration from the former colonies: half of the runners-up's World Cup squad in Qatar in 2022 had African ancestry.

Meanwhile the collapse of football borders had enabled the English Premier League, richest of all, to become a new *El Dorado* not only for players but also for managers and coaches, owners and executives. For the domestic media to expect the Football Association to withstand this iteration of progress would be like Canute's courtiers expecting him to hold back the seas.

A football conundrum has been reduced to semantics. A "national team" as conceived by English and Scottish pioneers in 1872 and then French and Belgians in creating FIFA no longer exists. "Representative team" is more accurate but unwieldy. So "national team" is the designation that must stick.

Only, do not take that anachronistic label too seriously, whether picking either players or managers. That horse has long since bolted.

Reverse emigration...Italy won the 1934 World Cup with four Argentine-born players in their squad

BOOKS THIS MONTH

THE PREMIER
By Jimmy Burns
(Pitch Publishing, £14.99)

The Premier: Big Business and Great Football explores the history and evolution of the world's most popular football league. Discover the curiosities and stand-out moments as well as fascinating stories of the owners, managers, players, fans and chroniclers who've all lit up England's top flight. From Wenger's Arsenal and Ferguson's Manchester United to the Guardiola-Klopp rivalry, and hooliganism, tragic memories and tribalism to controversial overseas owners, this is the Premier League in all its colour and complexity.

TINPOT
By Simon Turner
(Pitch Publishing, £14.99)

Today's football tournaments seem to have been with us forever. They are the survivors – the bright ideas that quickly caught on. *Tinpot* recalls the strange and forgotten competitions that sparked into life before shuffling off their mortal coil. It tells over 40 forgotten tournaments' stories, giving them the spotlight they deserve. It's time they were forgotten no more.

Jonathan WILSON

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Tuchel's Chelsea era offers hope

The German's other spell in England suggests he will be a success with the national team

In the nine Premier League games before Thomas Tuchel took over as manager of Chelsea in January 2021, they kept just two clean sheets and conceded 13 goals. There was a sense that Frank Lampard's side could be got at. In the ten league games that followed, they kept eight clean sheets and conceded just twice. Famously, one hour-long training session was enough for Tuchel to tighten up the midfield. And for England that is hugely positive news.

There have been two main strands to the debate around Tuchel's appointment as England manager. On the one hand, there were the doubts about whether a major nation should ever have a foreign coach, which could themselves be split in two: those who feel that the notion of international football as the best of ours against the best of yours extends to the bench as well as the players, and those who see it as a failure of England's systems that there was not really a viable English candidate. And on the other hand, the concern about whether club management skills transfer to national management.

Instant impact... Tuchel led Chelsea to the Champions League trophy within five months

> The Chelsea example shows promise. Tuchel came into a squad of very good players who had lost their way and within a training session was able to organise them

One of the great problems for national sides appointing a coach, quite aside from the fact that their budgets are much smaller than elite club sides, is that nothing is really much like national management. Some of the most successful national managers had little or no success at club level – Aime Jacquet, Joachim Low, Lionel Scaloni, Luis de la Fuente – while great club managers have often found themselves frustrated by the stop-start nature of the international game and the lack of time available to work with players. Arrigo Sacchi described being in charge of Italy as like being "a eunuch in a harem of beautiful women".

The truth, frankly, is that a clear picture of Tuchel's capabilities will emerge only at the World Cup in 2026. Plenty of managers have excelled in qualifying only to falter amid the pressure of a major tournament; and plenty have scraped through qualifying before pulling everything together over the six-week span of the decisive camp. The intensity of tournaments, players and managers living together for an extended period, are like nothing else in the game. They bring emotional pressures, but they are also opportunities for managers to really instil their ideas.

But the Chelsea example shows promise. Tuchel came into a squad of very good players who had lost their way and within a training session was able to organise them. He has been tactically flexible through his career, happy to use a back three or a back four, sometimes playing with two holders in midfield and sometimes with a more attacking triangle. He is pragmatic. His side will press, although not with abandon, and he has shown a capacity not to be cowed by big-name players. When Scaloni won the World Cup

Coach and captain...Tuchel knows how to get the best out of Harry Kane

with Argentina in 2022, he picked a different shape for every knockout game, adapting to circumstance; Tuchel is perhaps the first England manager who seems tactically and temperamentally capable of doing something similar.

The challenge for Tuchel is an unusual one for an England manager. For a long time, the question seemed to be where the creativity was going to come from, but the issue now is a surfeit of creativity. When you have Jude Bellingham, Phil Foden, Cole Palmer and Bukayo Saka, somebody is going to miss out. The four could play together, but that would require Bellingham to play deeper, and it would mean two other major changes: Harry Kane is at his best when he can drop off and have players run beyond him, which none of those four naturally do, while Declan Rice needs a dedicated holder alongside him; for all his gifts, he is not a natural occupier of space.

Tuchel's challenge is to find balance. Kane played well for him at Bayern Munich and will surely retain his place. Injuries are perhaps just beginning to sap at him, but he will still only be 32 by the time the World Cup begins. But that means a need for players who will run beyond him. Anthony Gordon, at the moment, seems the only viable candidate but, well as he played away to the Republic of Ireland, he was poor against Iceland and Greece.

There's need of a left-footed left-back to offer width if the left-sided attacker cuts infield, which could be good news for Ben Chilwell, who played well for Tuchel at Chelsea, albeit as a wing-back. A switch to a back three, in fact, could be a way of resolving the Rice issue in midfield, with John Stones stepping up as an auxiliary midfielder out of possession and Trent Alexander-Arnold at wing-back with Kyle Walker's pace as cover on the right of the three. But then it's hard to see where Saka fits.

There are almost too many options at Tuchel's disposal. His job is to be clear-sighted enough to cut out the noise and work to his vision.

Mateo RETEGUI

(Atalanta)

Born in a suburb of Buenos Aires, the striker became the latest in a long line of Argentine-born players to represent Italy when scoring against England on his *Azzurri* debut back in March 2023. At the time, Retegui was still at Boca Juniors before moving to Genoa in July 2023. A solid return of seven goals in 29 Serie A games in 2023-24 earned the 25-year-old a move to Atalanta where this season he has scaled even greater heights.

In October, he became the first player of the Serie A campaign to hit double figures for goals after notching six in three games, and he was also on target in the Nations League versus Belgium and Israel. After his display against the latter, Italy boss Luciano Spalletti described him as "perfect," adding: "He is deadly inside the box and has learned how to properly link up with the team. He will become a top player."

Omar MARMOUSH
(Eintracht Frankfurt)
Another in-form forward, nobody had scored more Bundesliga goals than Marmoush by the end of October, drawing transfer links to a number of top European clubs.

Damien DUFF
(Shelbourne)
The former Republic of Ireland and Chelsea winger won his first trophy as a manager in November, guiding Shelbourne to the League of Ireland title on the final day of the season.

Next month's edition will include a full round-up of Europe's summer leagues

Jimmy THELIN
(Aberdeen)
In his first season in charge of the Scottish Premiership side, the 46-year-old Swede won 15 of his first 16 games in all competitions, only dropping points in a 2-2 draw with Celtic. However that run came crashing to a halt – a 6-0 Scottish League Cup defeat to the Bhoys.

Cole CAMPBELL
(Borussia Dortmund)
The 18-year-old forward, who switched his international allegiance from Iceland to USA in March, made his Bundesliga debut in October.

"It is clear that the UEFA Ballon d'Or does not respect Real Madrid. And Real Madrid does not go where it is not respected"

Real Madrid react angrily to Vinicius Junior missing out on the 2024 Ballon d'Or

OBITUARIES

***Danke* Budde...Werder Bremen pay tribute to former goalkeeper Dieter Burdenski**

Dieter BURDENSKI (1950-2024)
Burdenski was a goalkeeping stalwart of Werder Bremen, setting a club record of 444 Bundesliga appearances over 16 years, while also winning 12 caps for West Germany between 1977 and 1984. Just four days before he was born in 1950, father Herbert scored against Switzerland for West Germany in their first game after the Second World War.

Abdelaziz BARRADA (1989-2024)
The French-born Morocco midfielder died of a heart attack aged just 35. A youth player with PSG, Barrada made his breakthrough in Spain with Getafe, for whom he once scored a winning goal against Real Madrid, before going on to have spells with Marseille, and Al Jazira and Al Nasr in the UAE. He won 26 caps for Morocco, including at the 2013 Africa Cup of Nations, and played for the Under-23s at the 2012 London Olympics.

Tragedy... Abdelaziz Barrada

Willi GIESEMANN (1937-2024)
A mobile centre-back whose 14th and last international for West Germany was cut short in 1965 by a leg fracture in a collision with Pele. His club career was spent with Wolfsburg and Bayern Munich in the pre-Bundesliga era, and Hamburg.

Peter CORMACK (1946-2024)
Cormack spent four years at Liverpool after being signed from Nottingham Forest in 1972 but his first was the most outstanding. The midfielder hit ten goals in 52 games as Bill Shankly's side won the league title and their first European trophy in the UEFA Cup against Borussia Monchengladbach. He also won the FA Cup, but his Anfield career was cut short by injury after 26 goals in 178 games.

He started his career with Hibernian in 1962 and played more than 200 games for the club during two spells. He also played for Toronto City, Bristol City and Partick Thistle as well as nine times for Scotland between 1966 and 1971. He later managed Partick Thistle, Anorthosis Famagusta, Botswana, Cowdenbeath and Greenock Morton.

Liverpool title winner...Peter Cormack

Dmytro BOHACHOV (1992-2024)
The midfielder starred for hometown club FC Sumy and played for Ukraine at Under-20 level. He died from injuries suffered during military service.

Tommy CALLAGHAN (1945-2024)
Midfielder Callaghan was signed twice by Jock Stein, originally for Dunfermline in 1962 and then again for Celtic in 1968. His debut goal against Partick Thistle was the first of 34 in 264 games before moving to Clydebank in 1976. By then, Callaghan had helped Celtic win six league titles, five Scottish Cups and three League Cups. He finished his career as player-manager of Galway United in the League of Ireland.

Tonci GABRIC (1961-2024)
The goalkeeper only played nine times in seven years for Croatia but his first was significant as it was the new state's international debut, a 2-1 friendly win against the USA in October 1990. Gabric played his club football for Celik Zenica, Rijeka, PAOK in Greece and back with Hajduk Split for whom he starred in their run to the Champions League quarter-finals in 1994-95. He was a member of Croatia's Euro '96 squad in England.

Modou JADAMA (1994-2024)
A Gambian-American defender who spent six seasons in the US with a variety of teams after making his pro debut with Chilean club Colo-Colo in 2015.

Anatoliy KONKOV (1949-2024)
The defender was a key member of the superb Dynamo Kyiv team that won the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1975. In 47 internationals for the USSR he hit eight goals, helping the Soviet Union to a Euro 1972 runners-up medal and bronze at the Montreal Olympic Games four years later. He went on to coach in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

Artyom YENIN (1976-2024)
One-time Russia midfielder who played for CSKA Moscow and Shinnik Yaroslavl.

Sefedin BRAHO (1953-2024)
Scored once in nine games in attack for Albania between 1973 and 1983, playing his club football for Luftetari and Partizani.

Jean-Jacques N'DOMBA (1954-2024)
The midfielder starred for Etoile du Congo in Brazzaville before moving to France in 1982, first with Marseille and then Le Puy, Lyon and Niort. He hit eight goals in 35 games for Congo between reaching the last four of the 1974 AFCON and returning to the finals again in 1992.

Austin ODUOR (1964-2024)
Ex-Kenya captain who lifted the African Cup Winners' Cup in 1987 with Nairobi's Gor Mahia. He was the father of former Kenya goalkeeper Arnold Origi, and the uncle of ex-Belgium striker Divock Origi.

Roald POULSEN (1950-2024)
Widely-travelled Danish coach who led Zambia to third place at the 1996 AFCON – just three years after the plane crash that killed 18 members of the squad.

Branko RASOVIC (1942-2024)
The defender claimed a piece of history as a member of the first Yugoslav club, Partizan Belgrade, to reach the European Cup final. They had led Real Madrid 1-0 in the 1966 final, but ultimately lost 2-1.

Walter SCHMIDT (1937-2024)
A key member of the Eintracht Braunschweig team that surprised West German football by winning the fledgling Bundesliga crown in 1967. Schmidt and Co. conceded just 27 goals, which stood as a Bundesliga record for more than two decades.

Trevor WHYMARK (1950-2024)
Ipswich Town's sixth highest scorer of all time, striker Whymark netted 104 goals in 335 games for the Tractor Boys. He was also capped by England in 1977.

Peter FREGENE (1947-2024)
Goalkeeper Fregene was selected for Nigeria at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City and the 1982 AFCON.

Lino FALZON (1941-2024)
Defender Falzon's debut for Malta in Denmark in 1962 was also the national team's competitive debut, a Euro qualifier.

Words by Keir Radnedge & Mark Gleeson

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"I won't coach in the next year for sure, I'm certain of that. I need to give myself time to make good decisions...I'm fortunate that there are lots of different opportunities presenting themselves"

Former England manager Gareth Southgate rules out taking another coaching role in the next 12 months

12 MOVES *you might have missed...*

TRANSFERS ★ LOANS ★ SACKINGS ★ HIRINGS ★ SWITCHES ★ RETIREMENTS

JESE Rodriguez

Ten months after his departure from Brazilian club Coritiba, the ex-Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain, Stoke City and Spain U21 forward moved to Malaysian side **Johor Darul Ta'zim**.

Mario BALOTELLI

The ex-Italy and Manchester City striker joined Serie A outfit **Genoa**, four months after leaving Turkish side Adana Demirspor and three years after his last stint in Italy with Monza.

Herve RENARD

Having been replaced by Roberto Mancini as **Saudi Arabia** coach, Renard returned to Riyadh after the Italian exited the role with the team struggling in World Cup qualifying.

Liam COOPER

The 33-year-old Scotland central defender, a free agent after ten years with Leeds United, moved to Bulgarian side **CSKA Sofia** and was immediately appointed club captain.

Dwight YORKE

The ex-**Trinidad & Tobago** striker was named the national team's head coach. It is Yorke's second managerial role, having previously been in charge of Australian outfit Macarthur FC.

Ravel MORRISON

The ex-wonderkid, who has 18 caps for Jamaica under his belt, joined the 14th club of his career: Emirati side **Precision**, who were recently promoted to the UAE's third tier.

Kevin STROOTMAN

The former PSV, Roma and Marseille midfielder, who won 46 Netherlands caps between 2011 and 2019, called time on his career three months after leaving Serie A side **Genoa**.

Brian RIEMER

Last seen in charge of Belgian side Anderlecht, the former Brentford assistant was appointed **Denmark** coach, replacing Kasper Hjulmand who stepped down after Euro 2024.

Josuha GUILAVOGUI

The 34-year-old midfielder, who has played for the likes of Bordeaux, Atletico Madrid, Wolfsburg and Mainz – and won seven caps for France – joined **Leeds United** as a free agent.

SANDRO

The former Brazil midfielder, whose club resume includes the likes of Genoa, Internacional and Tottenham, came out of retirement to join English seventh-tier club **Harborough Town**.

Jean-Louis GASSET

The 70-year-old, who played over 200 games for **Montpellier** in the 1970s and '80s, took charge of his hometown club for the third time with the team bottom of Ligue 1.

Lukas PODOLSKI

The ex-**Germany**, Gornik Zabrze and Arsenal forward retired from football aged 39, signing off with a testimonial in Cologne, the club where he originally made his name.

"We're talking of at least two months of training. I wasn't joking…there are one or two teams. Let's see what my mind tells me and, above all, my body"

Roma legend Francesco Totti confirms rumours that he is considering coming out of retirement at the age of 48

The month in numbers

The facts and stats that have caught our eye in the world of football this month…

50,000
Number of fans that attended Lukas Podolski's star-studded testimonial, which featured a Cologne XI versus a "Team Poldi".

54.69%
Erik ten Hag's win-rate at Manchester United before being sacked. Only Sir Alex Ferguson and Jose Mourinho had better records for the Red Devils.

€10m
Release clause United paid Sporting to hire head coach Ruben Amorim.

3
Number of games former France midfielder Claude Makelele lasted as coach of Greek outfit Asteras Tripolis, exiting the club undefeated.

4
Consecutive years the Ballon d'Or Feminin has gone to a Barcelona player after Aitana Bonmati won it for the second time in a row, just as her team-mate Alexia Putellas did before her.

Ballon d'Or Feminin…Barca and Spain star Aitana Bonmati

£65m
Value of a new five-year TV deal that the Women's Super League has agreed with broadcasters Sky Sports and BBC Sport.

Ballon d'Or winner… Manchester City and Spain midfielder Rodri

1
Manchester City players that have won the Men's Ballon d'Or award after Spain midfielder Rodri collected the 2024 gong.

2
Asian Footballer of the Year awards won by Qatar forward Akram Afif, who sealed the prize after firing his country to Asian Cup glory – just as he did in 2019.

16
Years and 72 days, the age of teenage goalkeeper Jack Porter when he became Arsenal's youngest-ever starter in their League Cup win over Bolton.

$20,446,667
Inter Miami salary of Lionel Messi, who was confirmed as the highest-paid player in MLS when the league's salary figures were revealed in October.

39
Age of Luka Modric when he became the oldest player to ever feature for Real Madrid, surpassing the record held by Ferenc Puskas in *Los Blancos'* 2-1 victory over Celta Vigo.

4
Number of English clubs that Raheem Sterling has played for in the UEFA Champions League – Liverpool, Manchester City, Chelsea and Arsenal – a new record.

1
English footballers to have played in Palestine after former Tranmere Rovers centre-back Josef Yarney made his debut for West Bank Premier League side Hilal Al Quds.

369
Days that Neymar was absent for with an ACL injury, before he returned in Al Hilal's back-and-forth 5-4 victory over Al Ain in the AFC Champions League Elite.

Goal-fest… nine goals were scored in Neymar's comeback game

4
Asian International Player of the Year awards won by South Korea and Tottenham ace Son Heung-min.

36
Number of games it took Erling Haaland to become Norway's all-time record male scorer, netting 34 international goals in that time.

134
Goals Argentina striker Lautaro Martinez scored for Internazionale to become the top foreign scorer in the Italian club's history.

150
Premier League appearances by ex-Liverpool and Cameroon centre-back Joel Matip, who announced his retirement at the age of 33.

Hanging up his boots… Matip

7
Years and 244 days, the length of Mark Robins' tenure in charge of Coventry City – making him the longest-serving coach in the EFL – before he was sacked in November.

61
Number of consecutive matches won by Turkmenistan's Arkadag, before the club lost for the first time in their history – a 3-2 defeat to Kuwait's Al Arabi.

ESM XI
EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

SEASON RANKINGS
Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Emiliano Martinez (Aston Villa)	3
David Raya (Arsenal)	3
David De Gea (Fiorentina)	2
Michele Di Gregorio (Juventus)	2
Franco Israel (Sporting)	2
Inaki Pena (Barcelona)	2
Matz Sels (Nottingham Forest)	2
Alisson (Liverpool)	1
Peter Gulacsi (RB Leipzig)	1
Alex Meret (Napoli)	1
Vanja Milinkovic-Savic (Torino)	1
Jan Oblak (Atletico Madrid)	1
Yann Sommer (Internazionale)	1

DEFENDERS

Virgil van Dijk (Liverpool)	8
Giovanni Di Lorenzo (Napoli)	7
Willi Orban (RB Leipzig)	6
Gabriel (Arsenal)	5
Bremer (Juventus)	4
Josko Gvardiol (Manchester City)	4
Trent Alexander-Arnold (Liverpool)	3
Riccardo Calafiori (Arsenal)	3
Pau Cubarsi (Barcelona)	3
Ruben Dias (Manchester City)	3
Federico Dimarco (Internazionale)	3
Eder Militao (Real Madrid)	3
Alex Grimaldo (Bayer Leverkusen)	3
William Saliba (Arsenal)	3
Alessandro Buongiorno (Napoli)	2
Dani Carvajal (Real Madrid)	2
Ibrahima Konate (Liverpool)	2
Inigo Martinez (Barcelona)	2
Juan Cabal (Juventus)	1
Andrea Cambiaso (Juventus)	1
Alphonso Davies (Bayern Munich)	1
Lucas Digne (Aston Villa)	1
Dodo (Fiorentina)	1
Denzel Dumfries (Internazionale)	1
Federico Gatti (Juventus)	1
Raphael Guerreiro (Bayern Munich)	1
Achraf Hakimi (Paris Saint-Germain)	1
Caio Henrique (Monaco)	1
Jules Kounde (Barcelona)	1
Ferland Mendy (Real Madrid)	1
Pedro Porro (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
David Raum (RB Leipzig)	1
Antonio Rudiger (Real Madrid)	1
John Stones (Manchester City)	1
Nicolas Tagliafico (Lyon)	1
Pau Torres (Aston Villa)	1

MIDFIELDERS

Cole Palmer (Chelsea)	10
Ryan Gravenberch (Liverpool)	6
Florian Wirtz (Bayer Leverkusen)	6
Jamal Musiala (Bayern Munich)	4
Pedri (Barcelona)	4
Michael Olise (Bayern Munich)	3
Marc Casado (Barcelona)	2
Marten de Roon (Atalanta)	2
Davide Frattesi (Internazionale)	2
Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich)	2
Giovani Lo Celso (Real Betis)	2
Moises Caicedo (Chelsea)	1
Fermin Lopez (Barcelona)	1
Phil Foden (Manchester City)	1
Morten Hjulmand (Sporting)	1
Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg (Marseille)	1
Stanislav Lobotka (Napoli)	1
Matheus Nunes (Manchester City)	1
Aleksandar Pavlovic (Bayern Munich)	1
Rodri (Manchester City)	1
Bernardo Silva (Manchester City)	1
Lucas Torreira (Galatasaray)	1
Federico Valverde (Real Madrid)	1
Joey Veerman (PSV)	1
Piotr Zielinski (Internazionale)	1

FORWARDS

Robert Lewandowski (Barcelona)	16
Harry Kane (Bayern Munich)	11
Erling Haaland (Manchester City)	10
Raphinha (Barcelona)	9
Lamine Yamal (Barcelona)	6
Viktor Gyokeres (Sporting)	4
Vinicius Junior (Real Madrid)	4
Kerem Akturkoglu (Benfica)	3
Bradley Barcola (Paris Saint-Germain)	3
Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (Napoli)	3
Omar Marmoush (Eintracht Frankfurt)	3
Cody Gakpo (Liverpool)	1
Kai Havertz (Arsenal)	1
Samu Omorodion (Porto)	1
Lois Openda (RB Leipzig)	1
Christian Pulisic (Milan)	1
Mateo Retegui (Atalanta)	1
Marcus Thuram (Internazionale)	1

ESM MEMBERS:
A Bola (Portugal), *Fanatik* (Turkey), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany), *La Gazzetta dello Sport* (Italy), *Kicker* (Germany), *Marca* (Spain), *Nemzeti Sport* (Hungary), *De Telegraaf* (Netherlands), *Tipsbladet* (Denmark), *ELF Voetbal* (Netherlands), *World Soccer* (England)

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THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

How Thomas Tuchel's two years in charge of Borussia Dortmund provided a blueprint for the rest of his coaching career: the football, the failures and the fall-outs

Words: Nick Bidwell

Any assessment of England's new manager Thomas Tuchel automatically involves the delicate process of disentangling all the 51-year-old German's many attributes from the less attractive features of his character, notably his visceral unwillingness to compromise and duty corporal style of management.

In the 15 years that have elapsed since he made his bow as a top-fight coach with Mainz, whom he steered to an incredible fifth-place finish in the Bundesliga in 2010-11 – the club's highest-ever placing – Tuchel has proved himself an outstanding cultivator of successful sides. A football obsessive with an astonishing attention to detail, searing intelligence and a flair for matchday strategy and training ground innovation, he loves nothing more than a battle of wits.

All that matters to him is winning, and as a provider of silverware he has more than come up to scratch, scooping every domestic honour in France with Paris Saint-Germain, masterminding Borussia Dortmund's German Cup triumph in 2016-17, securing a Bundesliga title for Bayern the season before last – albeit only being in charge for the final three months of the campaign – and outthinking Pep Guardiola in the 2021 Champions League final as Chelsea boss, one year after leading PSG to the final.

The former Real Madrid and Bayern boss Jupp Heynckes once aptly described Tuchel as someone who "burns for football". And therein, perhaps, lies the problem – his inability to totally control his emotions, often too combustible, too highly-strung, too abrasive. Personality clashes and fall-outs tend to come with the Tuchel territory. You have to accept him as he is, to take the sophisticated organisation, extreme tactical flexibility and crafty overloads along with his trademark intensity. Some players can handle his weighty demands and acerbic demeanour. Others less so.

Tuchel's reign at Dortmund from 2015 to 2017, his first mission at a top European club, had numerous examples of him clashing with all and sundry, eventually paving the way for his dismissal in the early summer of 2017. But where it counts, on the field of play, his Dortmund were a sight to behold, especially impressive when finishing second to Guardiola's Bayern Munich in the 2015-16 Bundesliga title race. For most of that campaign, Tuchel's side were nothing less than a collective tour de force, outstanding in their positional and possession play, oozing vibrancy and tremendously fluid as an attacking force. Their final tally of 78 points was seven more than Tuchel's Bayern collected in winning the 2022-23 Bundesliga crown.

So much for the idea initially promoted in the German media that Tuchel had accepted a poisoned chalice in taking over at Dortmund from the iconic Jurgen Klopp, who captured back-to-back Bundesliga titles in 2011 and 2012 and narrowly lost to Bayern Munich in the 2012-13 Champions League final. All dynasties have to end sometime, and after seven years in charge the Klopp magic had, to a large extent, dissipated, with his final season there ending in an embarrassing mid-table finish.

On his arrival in the Ruhr, Tuchel found himself surrounded by end-of-an-era decay. Yet he soon had the team firing again, crucially convincing veterans such as Mats Hummels and Ilkay Gundogan to stay put, bringing in fresh blood in the shape of the former Freiburg goalkeeper Roman Burki and metronomic defensive midfield

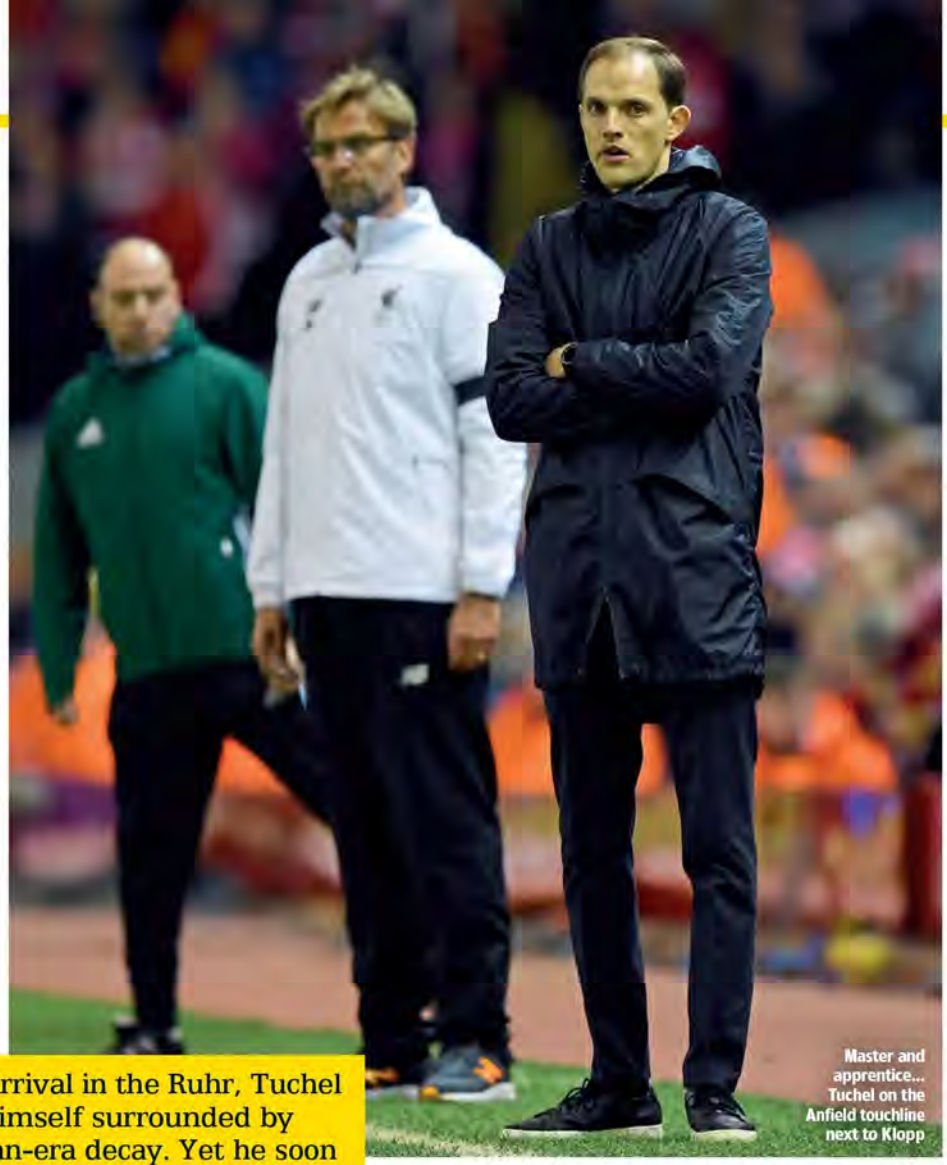
regulator Julian Weigl, and generally giving the side a top-to-toe makeover. Instead of the all-or-nothing Klopp heavy metal axe attack, a new style emerged: one of control, balance, variety and far more measured approach play.

Much of Tuchel's remedial work that season concentrated on the psychological, notably on nullifying the fear factor, the feeling of impending doom which seemed to take hold when too many good chances were missed. Tuchel not only broke that negative mindset, making the team tougher mentally, he also was successful in rendering the players more self-reliant, more able to adapt to changing circumstances and make sound, snappy decisions.

A key part of his teaching toolbox stemmed from the "Differential Learning" manual of Mainz University academic Wolfgang Schollhorn, whose theory contends that players are much more likely to learn techniques and sequences if simple repetition is canned in favour of a more subtle method, constantly incorporating small deviations or distractions into the process.

A diamond-shaped training pitch was utilised to hone the Dortmunder in the art of the diagonal forward run. Looking to regularly change the parameters, to keep the players thinking, they would play on extremely wide or narrow pitches, or Tuchel would order the squad to control the ball with their knees, calves or other body parts before passing. He wanted players with greater brainpower, and achieved it that season.

The passing of the baton from Klopp to Tuchel represented a massive culture shock for the players. Tuchel, far more hands on than Klopp, took charge of every session and never stopped squeezing the squad in pursuit of his aims. Some German newspapers spoke rather sneeringly at the time of Big Brother moves: the cameras which relentlessly rolled on the training ground, the GPS trackers to monitor player activity – then a relatively new phenomenon – and the strict rules regarding diet and sleep.



Master and apprentice... Tuchel on the Anfield touchline next to Klopp

On his arrival in the Ruhr, Tuchel found himself surrounded by end-of-an-era decay. Yet he soon had the team firing again

Euphoric...Dortmund supporters gather for a trophy parade of the German Cup

The difference between the two men was summed up when they met in the quarter-finals of the Europa League, as Klopp's side scored three late goals to overturn a two-goal aggregate deficit to triumph in the second leg in Liverpool. Tuchel's cold analytical mind had literally no answer to the sheer emotion of the Anfield crowd, driven on by Klopp. "If you expect an explanation, I probably have to disappoint you because an explanation would mean that things are logical or tactical," he said after the game, adding: "Ultimately we were hit by a late sucker punch from the opposition. S*** happens."

The following season, 2016-17, Tuchel's Dortmund continued to rack up positive results, clinching a Champions League berth via a third-place finish in the Bundesliga, beating Eintracht Frankfurt in the German Cup final and reaching the

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

RENE MARIC

While at the helm of Mainz, Tuchel came across a tactics blog entitled *Spielverlagerung*. Mightily impressed and always eager to look for marginal gains in unusual places, Tuchel had no hesitation in recruiting Maric – then just an enthusiastic fan – to do scouting and opposition analysis for him. Maric has since gone on to work for Borussia Monchengladbach, Dortmund and Leeds United, and is now Vincent Kompany's assistant at Bayern Munich.

HANS-MARTIN KLEITSCH

Tuchel had his first experience as a coach during a five-year stint working with the youngsters at Stuttgart, where Kleitsch was his mentor. In German football circles, Kleitsch is thought of as something of a grassroots guru and Tuchel was his highly valued assistant with the Under-19 side. "He [Tuchel] had the ability to dissect opponents," once declared Kleitsch. "He had X-ray eyes. His gameplans always worked."

RALF RANGNICK

The current Austria boss, previously in charge of Hannover, Schalke, Hoffenheim, RB Leipzig and Manchester United, saw a kindred spirit when he coached the young Tuchel at German third-tier club Ulm. Rangnick subsequently signed Tuchel for Stuttgart and, when the latter was forced to quit playing due to an irreparable knee injury, Rangnick encouraged him to take up a coaching spot at the club's academy, eventually taking over the Under-14 side in 2000. Tuchel says Rangnick opened his eyes to a new brand of football, with zonal defence replacing the old obsession with man-marking and a sweeper.

PEP GUARDIOLA

Tuchel has always been a huge fan of the Catalan maestro, so fascinated by the exceptional qualities of Pep's Barcelona that he would spend hours on end studying the nuts and bolts of that work of art *Blaugrana* system. The pair, now good friends, had their first real meeting of minds some years ago in a Munich restaurant, where an intense debate about tactics turned into a table-top demonstration using the salt and pepper pots.

quarter-finals of the Champions League. However, behind the scenes all was not well amid a host of fiery episodes. The sale of three of Dortmund's star names – Hummels, Gundogan and Henrikh Mkhitaryan – left Tuchel wondering if club CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke and sporting director Michael Zorc shared his ambitions for the club, and such was his displeasure with some of the signings made by recruitment guru Sven Mislintat that he banned him from the training ground.

More antagonism would ensue in April 2017 when the Dortmund team bus was attacked with three homemade pipe bombs en route to a Champions League quarter-final home tie against Monaco, a incident in which the Ruhr club's Spanish defender Marc Bartra and a police motorcycle outrider were injured. With the match postponed, Watzke duly consulted the players before agreeing to a replay the next day. Not that Tuchel had any interest in maintaining a united front, publicly stating that the decision was a *fait accompli* and that he happened not to be in favour. "We were told by text message that UEFA was making this decision," he lamented. "A decision made in Switzerland that concerns us directly. We will not forget it, it is a very bad feeling."

Watzke said later: "I gave the team the option in our talk on the Wednesday morning [the day of the rescheduled match] that every player feeling not capable of playing could just say it until the afternoon. The coach also had the right to address it. But not once was I confronted with this scenario."

German Cup winner ...Tuchel kisses the trophy in 2017

This was the final straw as far as Watzke was concerned. Slowly but surely, two distinct camps had crystallised at the Westfalenstadion. In one corner, Tuchel, the solo rebel. In the other, the club hierarchy and the squad, many of whom had reportedly grown tired of the coach's authoritarian ways. Tuchel's sacking at the end of the season was absolutely inevitable. "We, sporting director Michael Zorc and I, have worn ourselves out dealing with the coaching staff," declared Watzke in an open letter to supporters. "In the current situation we could not see any starting point for successful work in the future."

That's the Thomas Tuchel England have appointed. The FA will hope that the rhythms of international football, the long breaks between camps, will mean fewer fall-outs between Tuchel and his players. But the methodology and the man remain unchanged. One part brilliance and uncommon footballing insight, one part vitriol and vendetta. A flawed genius but a genius nevertheless.

SPECIAL FEATURE

THE BATTLE OF THE BLACK AND WHITE STRIPES

The 2024 Copa Libertadores final once again pits two Brazilian sides against one another

Words: Tim Vickery

In early July, Botafogo beat Atletico Mineiro 3-0 in a league game. True, Atletico had a player sent off early, and this was when they were at their lowest ebb, missing players on international duty and suffering with a fixture pile-up. But the worrying aspect for them is that Botafogo are now a much better team than they were then – this match came just before the side was strengthened with an impressive array of mid-year reinforcements. Indeed, three of the new recruits – Argentina World Cup winner Thiago Almada, ex-Napoli midfielder Allan and Brazil striker Igor Jesus – were unveiled on the pitch after that game.

Whatever the circumstances, that meeting in July highlights one of the key questions of the Libertadores final: if Botafogo hit their stride, will Atletico be able to defend against them?

The question is pertinent because in the league this season Atletico have conceded as many goals as some of the teams in the relegation zone. In the Libertadores, coach Gabriel Milito has worked hard on this – Atletico conceded just two goals in the six knockout games – but vulnerabilities exist. In the middle of his lopsided back three, Rodrigo Battaglia is a converted midfielder who can be exposed. Brazil international left-back Guilherme Arana and Junior Alonso, a first-choice defender for Paraguay, will hope to be able to control Luiz Henrique. But he will wander across, and the other flank can be left open. Gustavo Scarpa, Atletico's wing-back on that side of the field, is not a natural defender. His main function is to find space higher up the field and use his sweet left foot as a supply line for the strikers. So, down the Botafogo right, Almada will seek to combine with Jefferson Savarino, and Alex Telles will look to burst forward from full-back.

In full flight – a wonderful first half at home to Sao Paulo in the quarter-final, and even better second half at home to Penarol in the first leg of the semi-final – Botafogo are intimidating opponents. They have good collective play, full of clever diagonal passes, combined with individual virtues of talent, pace and power. And coach Artur Jorge can read the game and come up with little tactical tweaks to find a way through the opposing defence.

This leaves Milito with a selection dilemma. Should he start with a front three, retaining Deyverson at centre-forward alongside Hulk and Paulinho? He played all three against River Plate, home and away, but is entitled to believe that Botafogo carry a more potent threat. And with the possibility of extra-time, he may well be tempted to pack the midfield and save some firepower for later.

There is a powerful argument for caution. If his side can stay in the game, Milito may hope that Botafogo will crumble when confronted with their demons. The scars remain of last year's collapse in the league, when they threw away the title in the closing weeks. Some will point to the dismal display in the second leg of the semi-final against Penarol, when defending a 5-0 lead proved much more problematic than it should have been. But, on that occasion, there is the obvious excuse of fielding a weakened line-up. Much more pertinent is the evidence from the previous two rounds, when Botafogo were at full strength. In the quarter-final they were greatly superior to Sao Paulo only to concede late and subject themselves to the nerves of a penalty shootout.

The previous round against Palmeiras, their biggest rivals over the past two years, was even more dramatic. Botafogo had been superb. With five minutes plus stoppage-time left, Palmeiras needed three goals to force a shootout. It nearly happened. Botafogo suffered a gigantic wobble, Palmeiras scored twice, had one ruled out by VAR and still had time to hit the bar. The first Libertadores might be the most difficult to win, and from a mental point of view Botafogo are being pushed to the limit.

Another meeting with Palmeiras may also have a bearing on the Libertadores final. On November 26, just four days before the showdown in Buenos Aires, Botafogo and Palmeiras face each other in the match that may well define the destiny of this year's domestic league. Atletico, meanwhile, can prepare for the big day in relative tranquillity. The second leg of their domestic cup final against Flamengo was on November 10, giving them almost three weeks to focus on the Libertadores.

The battle of the black and white stripes, then, could make for a memorable final. The unprecedented Brazilian domination is a real problem for the Libertadores, with no solution in sight. But it gives us the prospect of a gripping game between two attractive sides, with plenty of nationalities represented on the pitch and on the touchline.

THE ROAD TO THE FINAL

ATLETICO MINEIRO

GROUP STAGE

Caracas 1-4 **Atletico Mineiro**
Atletico Mineiro 2-1 Rosario Central
Atletico Mineiro 3-2 Penarol
Rosario Central 0-1 **Atletico Mineiro**
Penarol 2-0 **Atletico Mineiro**
Atletico Mineiro 4-0 Caracas

LAST 16

San Lorenzo 1-1 **Atletico Mineiro**
Atletico Mineiro 1-0 San Lorenzo
Atletico Mineiro win 2-1 on aggregate

QUARTER-FINALS

Fluminense 1-0 **Atletico Mineiro**
Atletico Mineiro 2-0 Fluminense
Atletico Mineiro win 2-1 on aggregate

SEMI-FINALS

Atletico Mineiro 3-0 River Plate
River Plate 0-0 **Atletico Mineiro**
Atletico Mineiro win 3-0 on aggregate

BOTAFOGO

QUALIFYING

Aurora 1-1 **Botafogo**
Botafogo 6-0 Aurora
Botafogo win 7-1 on aggregate
Botafogo 2-1 Red Bull Bragantino
Red Bull Bragantino 1-1 **Botafogo**
Botafogo win 3-2 on aggregate

GROUP STAGE

Botafogo 1-3 Junior
LDU Quito 1-0 **Botafogo**
Botafogo 3-1 Universitario
Botafogo 2-1 LDU Quito
Universitario 0-1 **Botafogo**
Junior 0-0 **Botafogo**

LAST 16

Botafogo 2-1 Palmeiras
Palmeiras 2-2 **Botafogo**
Botafogo win 4-3 on aggregate

QUARTER-FINALS

Botafogo 0-0 Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 1-1 **Botafogo**
Botafogo win 5-4 on penalties

SEMI-FINALS

Botafogo 5-0 Penarol
Penarol 3-1 **Botafogo**
Botafogo win 6-3 on aggregate

Resurgent Atletico ready for final step

Libertadores success would cap a meteoric rise for the Belo Horizonte side

In a late flowering in the curious career of Ronaldinho, Atletico Mineiro won their first Copa Libertadores in 2013. But a second triumph has proved elusive.

The Belo Horizonte club have enjoyed an excellent few years – completing the league and cup double in 2021 (and making it to the Copa do Brasil final this year), inaugurating a new stadium last year and also taking advantage of a recent legislative change to re-organise themselves on business lines.

But the Libertadores has proved frustrating. In each of the last three campaigns Atletico were eliminated by Palmeiras – on away goals in the 2021 semi-finals, on penalties in the 2022 quarter-finals, and 1-0 on aggregate in last year's second round.

This time, fellow finalists Botafogo took care of Palmeiras, and Atletico have been able to beat a path to Buenos Aires for the final – and they may well see the Estadio Monumental as a happy hunting ground after holding River Plate to a goalless draw there to book their place in the November 30 decider.

It is certainly a familiar venue for head coach Gabriel Milito, who played there as a commanding centre-back for Argentina and in his two spells for Independiente, either side of his time in Spain with Real Zaragoza and Barcelona.

Milito has his own Libertadores frustration. Last year his attractive Argentinos Juniors side were unfortunate to fall in the last 16 to eventual champions Fluminense. In this unprecedented era of Brazilian dominance, clearly his best chance of winning the trophy was to make the move north to a big club with a squad deep enough to mount a challenge, and so Milito took charge of Atletico at the end of March, just before the start of this year's group phase.

The former defender is a coach who puts the emphasis on attack – and the over-cluttered calendar has proved a complication. Milito's worst time with Atletico was in the middle of the year, with the games coming thick and fast and some of his players away on international duty at the Copa America. The team were conceding far too many goals, and Milito came to the conclusion that in order to survive he would have to be more pragmatic. He has tightened up a little but, in the semi-final against River Plate, he showed that his first priority is still to hurt the opposition.

The symbol of Atletico's resurgence over the last few years is veteran striker Hulk, once a winger cutting in on to his howitzer left foot, now capable of operating all across the attacking line. Now 38, Hulk had played precisely two games in Brazil before coming back to join Atletico in 2021. Building a career abroad meant that he was often underrated to the point of blatant disrespect in his home country. That is emphatically no longer the case after showing his worth for over 200 games and scoring more than 100 goals in the black and white stripes.

> The symbol of Atletico's resurgence over the last few years is veteran striker Hulk

Since the start of last year, Hulk has formed a fine attacking partnership with Paulinho, who did not quite make the grade in an injury-hit spell with Bayer Leverkusen but has worked out well for Atletico. With seven goals, he is their top scorer in this year's competition. And at the business end of the Libertadores, Milito has added big centre-forward Deyverson, whose goal won the competition for Palmeiras in 2021. A beguiling mix of talent and eccentricity, the loose cannon has been firing well.

Deyverson proved decisive in eliminating defending champions Fluminense in the quarter-finals, and was the main character in the semi-finals too. In the first leg, River Plate couldn't handle him as he contributed two goals and an assist in the decisive 3-0 victory in Belo Horizonte. For the return leg, he showed the other side of his character, antagonising the River fans from the bus before the game, on the pitch during it, and later from the bench after he had been subbed off.

In a typically bold move, Milito started Deyverson alongside Hulk and Paulinho at the Monumental – a clear message that the coach did not want his team to fall into the trap of defensive passivity against a dangerous opponent. In the event, Atletico lost the corner count 20 to one, but River were never able to make the breakthrough, the game finished goalless and the biggest threat to Brazil's Libertadores domination had gone.

A famous phrase argues that if you hang a black and white shirt on the line in the middle of a storm, Atletico fans will root against the wind. This band of fanatics will travel down to Buenos Aires in their thousands to support the club known by its nickname *"galo"* – the cock – confident that when the final whistle blows, they will be doing the crowing.

Tim Vickery

Symbol of resurgence... Atletico's Hulk

Fallible favourites

Botafogo go to Buenos Aires as favourites for the crown – but their supporters have been hurt before

In their opening game of the group phase of this year's Libertadores, Botafogo found themselves 3-0 down at home to Junior of Colombia before half-time. This was a club still suffering from the trauma of 2023 – on top of traumas that were much more serious.

One of the great names of Brazilian football, Botafogo supplied many of the star names to the golden age of the national team, from Garrincha, Mario Zagallo, Didi and Nilton Santos through to Gerson and Jairzinho. This left an appalling chasm between a glorious past and a deeply depressing present. They were Rio de Janeiro's fourth club, drowning in debt and frequently visiting the second division. Then came the SAF law, allowing Brazil's clubs to turn themselves into businesses and have owners. It is not entirely clear how this is going to work out in the long term, either in general or specifically in the case of Botafogo, but in the short term it has proved utterly transformational for the Rio club.

US businessman John Textor took control in 2021 with the club in the second division. And already they are a continental power – although last year they paid a price for going too far, too soon.

Textor's pockets have not been the only feature in Botafogo's resurgence. The club's scouting work has been extraordinarily successful. First, they looked for a side that could be competitive: physically imposing with a centre-forward who could offer a platform and pace, plus strong wingers who could carry the counter-attack on their own. It was a model built for consolidation in the first division – and everyone, including the club, were taken by surprise when Botafogo found themselves with a massive lead in last year's domestic league.

A first title since 1995 appeared guaranteed – until the truth kicked in. After an alarming collapse they finished the season in fifth place, meaning they would have to fight their way through the qualifying rounds of this year's Copa Libertadores. The club and its supporters were still licking their wounds when they lost that opening group match at home to Junior.

But it proved the turning point. In came Artur Jorge, yet another Portuguese coach to adapt well to Brazil and produce immediate results. He steered them through a tough Libertadores group – after losing the first two matches, they booked their place in the knockout rounds with a game to spare. And his squad was getting stronger. The early season hero was Junior Santos, one of those fast, powerful strikers. By the time he picked up an injury, Luiz Henrique had found his feet. Signed from Spanish outfit Real Betis at the start of the year, the 23-year-old has really flourished. A left-footed right-winger, he has been tormenting defences for club and, recently, for country too, having made his debut in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers in September and scoring his first Brazil goals in October's matches.

> A few months ago, Igor Jesus was a virtual unknown playing in the United Arab Emirates. He joined in July, and by October was Brazil's first-choice centre-forward, scoring on his debut against Chile

In the last few months came the serious investment – Botafogo have spent more on transfers in 2024 than the whole of last year's income, which has increased calls for some kind of financial fair play to be introduced in Brazil. They brought in Vitinho and Alex Telles, full-backs with Premier League experience (at Burnley and Manchester United respectively); in came Argentina World Cup winner Thiago Almada and, the biggest triumph of all, striker Igor Jesus. A few months ago, Jesus was a virtual unknown playing in the United Arab Emirates. He joined in July, and by October was Brazil's first-choice centre-forward, scoring on his debut against Chile.

The team now has more quality and a much wider attacking repertoire. There have been times in the last few months when they have occasionally looked like the best and most attractive team to come out of South America since the Flamengo side of 2019 – the one that began the era of Brazil's Libertadores domination. There were flashes of this level of play in all three of the knockout rounds – most notably the second-half destruction of Penarol in the first leg of the semi-final, when the Uruguayans, who had resisted so well before the interval, were reduced to a quivering wreck as they went down 5-0.

The importance of the likes of Luiz Henrique and Igor Jesus was keenly felt in the return game, when they and some others were rested, and Botafogo's defeat could easily have been heavier than 3-1.

The notorious pessimism of the club's fans – "there are things which only happen to Botafogo" is a common lament – was put to the test. But here they are in their first Libertadores final, with the Lone Star club going into the match as title favourites.

Tim Vickery

Libertadores top scorer... Junior Santos

eyewitness

Bence Bocsak reports

HUNGARY

The boys club that made Hungarian history

Hungary had little to celebrate at Euro 2024 but the country did at least make a small bit of history.

Kevin Csoboth's winner against Scotland, scored in the tenth minute of second-half stoppage-time, became the latest goal in the tournament's history in regulation time. Instigated by Dominik Szoboszlai, who started Hungary's quick counter-attack in his own half, the goal was very much a product of the Fonix Gold academy.

Watching on inside Stuttgart's MHP Arena, the academy's founder, Zsolt Szoboszlai, beamed with pride. He had watched his son, Dominik, link with Csoboth to score goals like that ever since they were young boys representing the yellow strips of Fonix Gold in Szekesfehervar – a suburban city roughly 40 miles away from Hungary's capital, Budapest.

"It's always a great feeling to see them in the national team," Zsolt tells *World Soccer*. "It's a new feeling, too, and we appreciate every moment."

Zsolt founded the academy back in 2007 alongside a few of his friends after he had left Hungarian top-flight club Fehervar, where he worked as a youth coach.

"I had different ideas about the academy system in Hungary," Zsolt explains. "So, I decided with two other parents to create a team where we can work with our own philosophy, and this is how Fonix Gold started."

Fonix Gold's beginnings were humble. Zsolt only had enough players to put together two age groups: the 1999 category and the 2000 one. Yet remarkably, three players from those groups – Szoboszlai, Csoboth and Rapid Vienna full-back Bendeguz Bolla – are current Hungary internationals while a fourth, centre-forward Levente Szabo, was signed to Atalanta's academy and now plies his trade in the German second tier for Eintracht Braunschweig.

"I have to be honest, we never thought about where we would get to, but we knew we wanted to do something different," adds Zsolt.

Zsolt and his fellow coaches were passionate about player development. They spent hours reading up on the game and watching materials on YouTube that would help them come up with ideas for training sessions, leading him to come up with some innovative coaching techniques that have since attracted headlines in Hungary and beyond.

"The children were always holding onto each other and pulling on each others' shirts, and I saw a drill on the Internet about kids playing while holding golf balls in their hands so I thought I would try it," he explains. "It was the same with the headbands [instead of bibs]. They wore the same-coloured shirts, but their headbands were different colours, so they had to look up to find each other."

For years, Fonix would train on a small indoor space located on the outskirts of Szekesfehervar that could hold only two seven-a-side pitches. This meant Zsolt and his staff would focus on the basics of the game and mastering the technical aspects.

"We wanted the kids to play football," he says. "Our training ideas were influenced by Ajax and any other ideas we could find. We took the best ideas or the ones that we liked from everywhere. We wanted the children to be perfect technically and to be at their maximum technical ability."

Made in Fonix... Kevin Csoboth and Dominik Szoboszlai celebrate Hungary's record-breaking goal at Euro 2024

Zsolt and his coaches were ambitious, too. They wanted to test their players against the very best in the country, and potentially even the world.

In 2011, Zsolt heard about a youth tournament called the Cordial Cup, which was holding qualifiers in Hungary. He entered Fonix's 2000 age group for the national qualifiers and they breezed past the competition, beating some of the best academies in the country in the process, including MTK Budapest, Ferencvaros and Honved.

"We won that without any problems. We beat all the big teams," Zsolt says proudly. "And then we went out to play the Cordial Cup, we did our thing and before we realised it, we were in the final."

The youth tournament, which was hosted in Salzburg, Austria, included big European names such as Juventus, Bayern Munich, Red Bull Salzburg and Aston Villa as well as clubs from further afield including Japan and North America. Zsolt's team overcame them all to win the tournament with Szoboszlai and Csoboth the star players – linking up just as they would go on to do at Euro 2024 some 13 years later.

At the time, Zsolt had little notion of just how far his young players would go. But success at the tournament gave him an indication that his academy was heading in the right direction.

Baby faced...a young Szoboszlai lifts the Cordial Cup trophy
Credit: Fonix Gold

Young talents... Fonix Gold players celebrate winning the 2011 Cordial Cup
Credit: Fonix Gold

"The feedback was brilliant," Zsolt says. "Even the big teams were impressed by how we played football and how we were moving the ball. But it was a much better feeling to see our work paying off. How our players were able to do what we taught them in training even in an environment like that."

In the years since, Zsolt's

protégés have graduated to the professional game and served as testament to his methods. With captain Szoboszlai, Csoboth and Bolla all called up for Euro 2024, Fonix had three academy graduates in Hungary's squad in Germany – only MTK Budapest (four) had more.

With Fonix's growing reputation, Zsolt has managed to gradually expand the academy and build on the club's foundations. For years, the club would only run up to Under-15 level before the academy's brightest prospects would be snapped up, but in recent years Zsolt has added an Under-16, Under-17, Under-19 and now a senior team.

"We decided to build a senior team so that the players who stayed at the club could still play football," Zsolt explains.

Zsolt entered his team at the lowest level in Hungary's sixth tier, and they soon earned three consecutive promotions to reach the third tier – where they are competing for the first time in the 2024-25 season.

Hungary's third tier is the first semi-professional league in the country. Having come from an amateur background, it means Fonix are now up against teams with far greater finances. But Zsolt is relishing the prospect and knows his young players will gain invaluable experience by challenging themselves at a higher level.

"Our goal now is to stay in the third division and for our young players to gain as much experience from playing in this senior environment as much as possible," Zsolt says.

Fonix Gold had three academy graduates in Hungary's squad at Euro 2024 – only MTK Budapest (four) had more

Fonix are the youngest squad in the league with most of the players in the team merely teenagers.

"Our oldest player is 34 – he is our goalkeeper coach in the academy – but most of our players are 16 and 17 with some players in their early 20s as well. It's a very young squad."

In the last decade, clubs like Kecskemet and Gyori ETO have made it from Hungary's third tier into the top flight, with the former even competing in the Conference League qualifiers last season. But Zsolt is not harbouring such ambitions for Fonix just yet.

"At this stage it's too early to dream of the second or first division," he admits. "We don't have the finances to compete in those divisions."

Still, having seen what Fonix have achieved in the last decade, it would not be a huge surprise to see the club defy the odds again and make those unprecedented feats in the near future.

Fonix began their inaugural campaign in Hungary's third tier with three wins from their first six matches – very much maintaining Zsolt's philosophy of attacking football.

Looking back at how far the academy has come from its humble beginnings, Zsolt feels pride at what Fonix have achieved. Especially with his son being the flag bearer of not just the academy but the entire nation.

"We had luck as well, of course, but we worked hard for it," he says. "We started from a small space, and we are still a small organisation, but we have still managed to develop players who could reach the highest stages in the game.

"I can't remember the last time a Hungarian player made it as far as Dominik. In the last 30-40 years I don't think there has been anyone like him."

Now Zsolt's goal is to create more Szoboszlais in the country and grow the foundations of the sport even further.

"I hope in the future we will have at least ten more players like Dominik," he concludes.

Flag-bearer...Hungary captain and talisman Dominik Szoboszlai is the darling of a nation

eyewitness

James Kelly reports

WALES & ENGLAND

One night in Shropshire

On a chilly night in late October, with the end of British Summer Time just a few days away, a unique footballing occasion is about to unfold. For the first time ever, a team from the Welsh top flight will host a match in the group stage of a UEFA competition. But the hosts aren't based in Wales, the game is taking place 20 miles from their usual home and nine miles from the Welsh border, and many of the supporters in attendance are wearing the colours of a third-tier English club. This is the Conference League clash between The New Saints and Kazakh outfit Astana at Shrewsbury Town's New Meadow.

TNS – or The New Saints of Oswestry Town & Llansantffraid to give them their full name – originally hail from the small village of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain in Mid Wales. Founded in 1959, the club's ascent to current heights began when three promotions in four seasons took them to the top flight in 1993. The rise continued in 1996 when they won the Welsh Cup to earn a place in the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup qualifying round. Despite a 6-1 aggregate defeat to Ruch Chorzow of Poland, the club would never be the same again.

Local computer tycoon Mike Harris had paid £10,000 for shirt sponsorship for the two games, but then committed to £250,000 over five years if the club would incorporate his company's name.

Renamed Total Network Solutions Llansantffraid, a year later the club dropped its place name, becoming the first club in the UK solely known by a sponsor's name amidst nationwide ridicule.

The club won the league title for the first time in 1999-2000 and have been at the top of the Welsh pyramid ever since. In the past 15 seasons, TNS have won the Cymru Premier 12 times – including an undefeated campaign last season – and the Welsh Cup on seven occasions. In December 2016, they broke Ajax's 44-year-old record of 26 consecutive victories in all competitions (a record since eclipsed by Saudi Arabian champions Al Hilal).

However, for all this domestic dominance, TNS had never managed to qualify for the group stage of a European competition. Facing illustrious opposition including Anderlecht, Legia Warsaw, Copenhagen, Liverpool and Manchester City across 27 years, a total of 86 matches had failed to bring a single qualification.

This season appeared to be more of the same, with defeats in the Champions League and Europa League qualifiers to Ferencvaros and Petrocub Hincesti of Moldova respectively. However, the re-formatting of UEFA's ▸

Shrewsbury's New Meadow...the venue of The New Saints' first-ever home group stage clash in Europe

Opening goal...Rory Holden heads TNS in front

competitions for the 2024-25 season afforded a third opportunity, with a Conference League play-off against Panevezys. TNS won the first leg in Lithuania 3-0, and then drew 0-0 at home to seal the landmark of a first domestic Welsh side to qualify for a European group stage.

That is where things get slightly complicated.

Back in 2003, TNS merged with Oswestry Town, another top-flight side beset with financial problems. Given TNS were limited in expanding their own ground in Llansantffraid it was a win-win situation, with an eventual relocation to Oswestry in 2007.

Oswestry Town were founding members of the Football Association of Wales (FAW) in 1876, with the town itself containing several Welsh street names, but the town has been in England since 1535.

Despite the border being porous in Mid Wales – many people commute over it for work, and the two largest Welsh towns of Newtown and Welshpool use postcodes for the English county of Shropshire – some wish TNS would simply leave Welsh football altogether.

It is worth noting TNS are not the only English-based club playing in Wales, with three other Shropshire-based clubs – Bishop's Castle Town, Newcastle and Trefonen – all playing in the lower reaches of Welsh football. But their amateur status means they are not allowed to gain promotion; TNS, in contrast, are the only full-time domestic club in the system.

The decision to play their Conference League games in the English town of Shrewsbury, some nine miles from the Welsh border, does not help with the tension. If the club is to continue receiving the benefits of European qualification via the Cymru Premier, say their critics, they should play those matches in Wales.

Yet football in Wales is unusual in Europe, given that its four largest clubs – Cardiff City, Newport County, Swansea City and Wrexham – all play in another country's league system, the English Football League. This fact is rooted in historical logistics, with North and South Wales poorly linked. Driving from the largest settlement in the north, Wrexham, to its southern equivalent Cardiff takes at least three-and-a-half hours. By contrast, those in Wrexham can be in Liverpool and Manchester in an hour.

> "We're extremely proud to represent Wales in this competition. We want to do what we can to improve our domestic game"
>
> **TNS head coach Craig Harrison**

This has seen TNS's larger European games often moved to North Wales. For example, in 2005 the club played Liverpool at a sold-out Racecourse Ground in Wrexham, some 15 miles north of Oswestry.

Despite Wrexham's recent Hollywood transformation, their ground is not currently suitable for UEFA competitions. The only eligible Welsh options are to be found in the south, 120 miles from Oswestry.

TNS have played in Cardiff for previous Europa League qualifiers with Midtjylland and Viktoria Plzen, but after liaising with UEFA arranged to use Shrewsbury – one sixth of the distance – for this season's home Conference League matches.

"We'd like to thank Shrewsbury Town for allowing us to host these historic matches at the New Meadow," says Harris before the game. "We are hopeful the community will come out in full force to support The New Saints."

Loyal supporters...a TNS fan watches on

Decisive...Declan McManus makes it 2-0 from the spot

TNS manager... Craig Harrison

The 2,202 spectators that have turned out for Astana's visit might be less than a quarter of the ground's capacity, but it is ten times TNS's average crowd.

Any hopes of striking up conversation with TNS ultras soon evaporate; most of the fans sat beside *World Soccer* inside the New Meadow are supporters of other clubs – Shrewsbury Town's yellow and blue colours are more common than TNS's green and white – that have been attracted by the sheer bizarreness of European football on their doorstep. Still, when the whistle goes and the match gets underway, they are undeniably here to cheer on TNS.

Waving across the pitch in the away stand are several Kazakh flags. Of the 50 or so in this area, it is reported all are UK residents, with none having fancied the 4,800km trip from Kazakhstan's capital.

Given the debates over geography, in many ways Astana are perfect first visitors. While western Kazakhstan lies in Europe, the capital city is in the country's east, closer to Beijing and Mumbai than UEFA's headquarters in Switzerland.

Despite only being formed in 2009, Astana are experienced European competitors. In 2015-16, they became the first Kazakh side to compete in the Champions League, going unbeaten at home with draws against Atletico Madrid, Benfica and Galatasaray. Since then they have made the Europa League group stages on four occasions, reaching the round of 32 in 2017-18 and securing a famous 2-1 win over Manchester United two seasons later.

As a result, TNS go into tonight's game as underdogs, particularly given the absence of one of the central figures in getting them to this stage: striker Brad Young, who scored 22 league goals last season and then notched twice in the Conference League qualifiers before being snapped up by Saudi Pro League club Al Orobah.

"I think this will be our opportunity to show what we can do at this level," Harris tells *BBC Sport* before kick-off.

Within six minutes, the visitors have hit the post and forced a good save from Connor Roberts, and it appears there will only be one outcome.

However, a spirited TNS performance in the opening match away to Fiorentina – keeping the tie scoreless until the 65th minute and eventually losing 2-0 – gives cause for optimism. TNS grow into the game, largely allowing Astana possession and looking to strike on the counter.

It is an approach that brings the game's first goal. Just before half-time, Jordan Williams breaks down the left flank, swinging in a beautiful cross to the back post where by Rory Holden heads home.

Almost immediately after the restart, the same player rushes onto a lofted through ball from Declan McManus, clipping over Alexandr Zarutskiy and forcing a goal-line clearance. TNS look to the referee for a potential penalty, but all their protests result in is a yellow card for head coach Craig Harrison.

In a back-and-forth game, it falls to the pace of TNS's Adam Wilson to settle matters. Expertly collecting a long ball, the substitute races towards goal and cuts inside, with his effort striking an Astana arm. From the resultant penalty, McManus steps up to double the hosts' lead and seal a first-ever win in the group stage of European competition for a Welsh club.

And, for all their naysayers, TNS are undeniably representing Welsh football. Of the starting line-up in Shrewsbury, five are Welsh – in Florence, the figure was seven. One of them, midfielder Leo Smith, gives a post-match interview to Welsh language TV channel *S4C*.

"We're extremely proud to represent Wales in this competition," says Harrison after the game. "We want to do what we can to improve our domestic game."

Victory is worth €400,000 to TNS, which, combined with the €5m that they received for reaching this stage, will ensure that they continue to dominate domestically.

But there are trickle-down effects too; beating Astana adds desperately needed points to Wales' UEFA co-efficient, which is currently one of the lowest in Europe. Only Andorra, Belarus, Gibraltar, North Macedonia and San Marino are currently ranked below Wales, but this result means the league will have four European slots from the 2026-27 season.

"The bigger picture is that can we get in a position where we don't have to worry about four positions in Europe again," adds Harrison.

And there will be a financial benefit for the other Welsh clubs, too.

"€600,000 of what we would normally get for appearing in the qualifiers, that money has gone into the FAW and will be distributed amongst the other clubs," explains Harris. "Instead of us getting that, that now goes into the main pot.

"I think there's €1m there now to be distributed to the other 11 clubs."

Regardless of what happens in TNS's remaining matches – Greek side Panathinaikos will be the final league-stage visitors to Shrewsbury when they arrive in December – the club have already broken new ground for Welsh football.

THE OTHER JOHAN

The late Johan Neeskens was almost as crucial to Total Football as his more celebrated team-mate and namesake, writes **Keir Radnedge**

When Gianni Rivera hoisted aloft the European Cup in Madrid in 1969 he was apparently confirming Italian rule over European club football. As Milan celebrated their 4-1 victory over Ajax, the Dutch team slipped away, written off by the media as naive interlopers in a tough new world of tactical cynicism.

How wrong could the cognoscenti have been. Within a few more years, it became clear that Milan's triumph had been a swansong for *Calcio's* pride and the mere presence of Ajax at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium a portent of better days to come through the concept of Total Football.

Football's tactical progress has been all about evolution rather than revolution. Hence, Total Football can be traced back to what Willy Meisl forecast as "The Whirl" in his seminal book *Soccer Revolution* in the mid-1950s. The noted sports journalist and younger brother of the Austrian *Wunderteam* supremo Hugo Meisl envisioned how improving levels of tactical creativity and fitness would open up an era marked by positional fluidity.

Total Football was Meisl's Whirl brought to life, itself paving the way for further tactical legacies such as today's inverted full-backs. The enabling factor was not only imaginative coaching but also the coincidental emergence of appropriate talented players such as not only Johan Cruyff but team-mates including most notably Johan Neeskens.

Rinus Michels was the coach who owns much of the credit. Michels had been a bullish centre-forward for Ajax in Dutch football's part-time days of the 1950s who then built on the standards and ideas of English coaches/managers such as Vic Buckingham and Jack Reynolds. It was Buckingham who handed a debut to Cruyff and "Iron Rinus" who duly succeeded him in the top job at De Meer in 1965.

Michels had his own ideas about how modern football should – and could – be played. He possessed a sharp eye for the right players and characters to enrich his evolving team and style. Hence the signing of Yugoslav central defender Velibor Vasovic, a European Cup runner-up with Partizan Belgrade in 1966, to be his captain. Michels needed a lieutenant after his own mind to maintain discipline among his lively youngsters, many of whom had grown up as teenagers in the same Amsterdam streets and were eager to bring the spirit of the Sixties into their football.

Neeskens was another outsider. He had built a multi-talented reputation across various sporting disciplines in his home town of Heemstede in the north but settled to football with local club Racing from whom Michels signed him in 1970.

At first Michels was uncertain how best to deploy Neeskens but his stamina, energy and sure-footed tackling soon saw him established in the team that won Ajax's first European Cup against Panathinaikos at Wembley at the end of his first season. ▶

Barcelona days... Neeskens in action for Barca in the late 1970s

The Ajax midfield was perfectly balanced with the playmaking talent of Gerrie Muhren, the metronomic power of Arie Haan and the aggressive energy of Neeskens. Michels enforced high standards of fitness, which fuelled the fluidity of left-back Ruud Krol plus centre-backs Barry Hulshoff and the German Horst Blankenburg, successor to Vasovic. When one of them roamed forward, Neeskens was often the man, unnoticed, to cover back and fill the space. Ajax team-mate Sjaak Swart described him as "worth two men in midfield."

Nothing complicated about it, Neeskens insisted: "Apart from the goalkeeper, you attack with the whole team and then you defend with the whole team. When the opponents have the ball, you try to find their weakest link, press, try to win the ball and then play it forward as quickly as possible."

To Cruyff, as often as not.

Cruyff was ever present to lead, inspire, demand and paint audacious new patterns across the pitch. But Cruyff's genius could not have shone as brightly without the protection Neeskens provided. This was why Michels, having left for Barcelona in 1972 and helped bring Cruyff along in 1973, went back to Ajax for Neeskens in 1974.

By that time Neeskens, with his self-caricatured flowing locks and rangy sideburns, was ready for a change. With Cruyff, Ajax had won two more European Cups as well as the World Club Cup, two European Super Cups plus two Dutch leagues and cups, but his departure had punctured the bubble.

Neeskens, in the meantime, had enhanced his own reputation in the Netherlands' run to the 1974 World Cup final. He took a battering in the second group-stage win over outgoing champions Brazil. Knocked unconscious in the first half by an off-the-ball elbow from Marinho Peres – his future Barcelona team-mate – Neeskens struck the crucial opening goal in a 2-0 win after an exchange of passes with Cruyff. Later it was for a rugby-type tackle on Neeskens by Luis Pereira that Brazil were fatally reduced to ten men.

In the final Neeskens opened the scoring again, this time from a second-minute penalty before any West Germany player had even touched the ball. He appeared nerveless but later Neeskens would admit to uncertainty and a change of his mind. Not that it mattered. Goalkeeper Sepp Maier dived right as Neeskens blasted down the middle. His fifth strike of the finals was one of his seven successful penalties among 17 goals in 49 appearances for his country between 1970 and 1981.

At Barcelona, Neeskens found greater qualities of leadership expected of him but he, Cruyff and Michels were unable to recreate the Ajax magic. Catalan fans called him Johan *Segundo*, Johan the Second, and his five years brought success in the Spanish Cup and European Cup Winners' Cup but nothing to compare with the Dutch days or to

> Cruyff's genius could not have shone as brightly without the protection Neeekens provided

World Cup final goal ...Neeskens scores v West Germany in the 1974 final in Munich

The other Johan... Neeskens poses for a photo with Barca team-mates Johan Cruyff and Hugo Sotil

Cover star...Neeskens on the front cover of *World Soccer* back in September 1974

match Barcelona's initial expectations.

Speculation swirled that the two Johans were no longer as tight as in the Ajax days and the distance widened with Cruyff's withdrawal from the 1978 World Cup finals in Argentina. This placed more attacking responsibility on the shoulders of Neeskens, but he found Austrian Ernst Happel a far more rigid and restrictive coach than Michels. The Dutch side who finished runners-up to their hosts for a second successive time were no longer the free-flowing total footballers but more physical and less fantasist.

Neeskens returned to Barcelona from his post-World Cup holiday to find Cruyff gone. He lasted only one more season, signing off with success in the European Cup Winners' Cup in a roller-coaster extra-time final against Fortuna Dusseldorf in Basel. Only his team-mates knew, but Neeskens had been told before the game that Barca would not renew his contract after a falling-out with club president Josep Lluis Nunez.

Midfield partner Juan Manuel Asensi recalled: "It was a bittersweet final for us and for him. Imagine, before the match, the club telling him they won't renew his contract. Then he amazed us because he still put a lesson in what a great team player he was. He ran more and put in tackles like never before, not worrying about getting injured and spoiling his chance of a contract with another club: a perfect example of professionalism."

Barca assistant... Neeskens worked alongside Frank Rijkaard for two seasons in Spain

Neeskens ended his national team career two years later in a World Cup qualifier against France. The World Cup defeats remained regrets but balanced, as time went on, by his pride in "our beautiful football."

By then, he had headed off to the United States. Six years with Cosmos in New York brought two NASL titles, before Neeskens gradually wound down his career with Groningen, Kansas City Comets then Baar and Zug in Switzerland.

Football remained his life. He stayed in the game as a coach. He was assistant to Guus Hiddink and Frank Rijkaard in two spells with the Dutch national team between 1995 and 2000, had a short spell as head coach at NEC Nijmegen and another spell as assistant at Barcelona, again under Rijkaard.

Passing on his enthusiasm for the game was an enduring pleasure for Neeskens, tutoring eager youngsters in its tactics and techniques. He died as he had lived, after being taken ill during a Dutch Federation coaching course in Algeria.

Among the stream of tributes was one in particular Neeskens would have appreciated. Ronald Koeman, current Netherlands coach, called him "a small man who was my big idol." Koeman added: "As a young boy you played football on the street and you asked: 'Who wants to be Cruyff? Who wants to be Van Hanegem?' I always wanted to be Johan Neeskens."

From the archives

In August 1975, Neeskens explained his midfield role to *World Soccer*...

"In the old days, the role of the midfield provider was straightforward. His job was to supply his front-runners with long through-passes and the like. If he did happen to score, it was always more the exception than the rule. Basically, he relied on other people to put the ball into the net.

But nowadays things have altered, and life for a midfield operator has become that much more arduous.

When I began my career with Ajax, I was what could be termed a "forager". My job was to create chances for my old pal Johan Cruyff. But as new tactics and formations evolved during the middle and late 1960s, I became compelled by the course of events to adopt a more flexible approach to my game. I had to learn, and learn quickly, the art of long-range shooting from all angles. I realised that with the advent of 4-3-3, 4-2-4 and 4-4-2, I would be required to not only make incisive runs for goal, but also at the same time make sure that I was always there lurking behind the main front-runners, waiting to pounce if the defence failed to clear the ball properly. So, as football developed tactically so did my approach.

Initially I found this transition a difficult proposition, but thanks to many friends – notably Rinus Michels – I eventually overcame my apprehensions and became what is to all intents and purposes an extra attacker.

Although I have been described by numerous pundits throughout the footballing world as a "midfield roamer", I'm not one of nature's born runners. I believe that if you are to create openings for your team-mates it's not the amount of running you do that counts, it's how accurate and penetrating your passes are.

During the World Cup finals last summer, Cruyff and I often had long detailed conferences about how I should combine with him, Rob Rensenbrink and our main striker Johnny Rep. Finally, after much thought and deliberation, we decided that the best, and in fact the only, method we could utilise, which would both confuse and deceive our opponents, would be to employ on the face of it only one out-and-out striker, namely Johnny Rep.

Several respected pressmen called this tactic revolutionary, and if you look at our policy from our opponents' point of view, they must have wondered how on Earth they would be able to blot out a striking force which, on paper anyway, didn't really exist.

I have made these points because I feel that by doing so you should begin to appreciate how I tackle the job of being not just a conventional linkman, but I hope a complete forward in every sense of the word.

To say that I'm a convinced and committed advocate of Total Football would be an understatement. Even when I joined Ajax as a raw youngster I was not happy with the almost stereotyped attitude of coaches who believed that each player had only one role to fulfil. As such, I was always at odds with this regimented ideology, so you can imagine how pleased and satisfied I became when the new more sophisticated tactics I have been talking about were introduced into Dutch football."

ARSENAL'S UNNATURAL NUMBER NINE

How Kai Havertz became one of the most effective strikers in the Premier League

Words: Ryan Baldi

Kai Havertz's recent success as a striker for Arsenal might have come as a surprise to many, but not to Simon Rolfes. Bayer Leverkusen's former academy manager spotted a goalscorer's instinct in the versatile Germany star at an early age, long before he was converted into a full-time centre-forward with the Gunners.

"As a 19-year-old, Kai scored a dream goal in a Bundesliga match in Nuremberg in catastrophic weather conditions," Rolfes, who is now Leverkusen's managing director of sport, tells *World Soccer*. "There was water on the pitch, the whole game was just accidents. He chipped the ball out of a huge puddle with incredible technique over the keeper and into the goal.

"It was as if he was playing on a fine English pitch in glorious sunshine in July."

Markus Anfang, who coached Havertz in Leverkusen's youth ranks, also identified latent goal-getting skills in the Arsenal man.

"At that time he already had an urge to score, a very strong left foot and a high football IQ," Anfang says. "Maybe he still had some problems with the execution of defensive tackles. And at a young age he still had a tendency to struggle with finding his rhythm when the first situations of a game didn't go his way. But that clearly isn't a problem anymore."

Havertz had played as a No.9 at times as a young player flourishing at Leverkusen, but he was viewed more as a No.10 or an inverted winger,

Emirates
FLY BETTER
HEAT.RDY
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cutting in from the right flank on to his stronger left foot. Roughly half of his appearances across three underwhelming seasons with Chelsea saw him deployed as a centre-forward, but the German never thrived in the role; certainly not to the extent that he has for Arsenal.

Mikel Arteta didn't see Havertz as a No.9 initially, either.

The Arsenal boss did plan a change of role for Havertz upon signing him from Chelsea for £65 million in the summer of 2023. Highlighting his physicality, anticipation and keen ability to connect with colleagues, Arteta astutely identified the attributes that have allowed Havertz to shine as a striker at the Emirates. But the manager envisioned a different trajectory for the player's positional redeployment: for the majority of his first season with Arsenal, Havertz played on the left side of a midfield three.

When Havertz had arrived at Stamford Bridge, it soon became clear that Chelsea didn't know whether they'd signed a forward, a winger or a No.10. One thing they were sure of, though, was that they'd acquired a supreme talent.

A standout prospect in Leverkusen's academy, Havertz became the club's youngest-ever debutant when he made his first senior Bundesliga appearance in October 2016, aged just 17 years and 126 days, and quickly established himself as a key player at the BayArena. He was named the best young player in Germany in 2018, made the Bundesliga Team of the Season in 2018-19, and scored 46 goals – the first of which made him the club's youngest Bundesliga scorer – and registered 31 assists in 150 games for the club.

His performances with Leverkusen made him one of the most sought-after young players in Europe. When Chelsea signed him in September 2020, aged just 21, the £71m fee reflected the competition for his signature and the widely accepted vastness of his talent.

Record breaker... Havertz during his early days at Bayer Leverkusen

"Kai played for Bayer Leverkusen for ten years," Rolfes says. "Even in his six years as a youth player, you could see that he was one of the most talented boys ever to wear our jersey. He proved this impressively in his four years in the first team. He very quickly matured into an international-class player."

But Havertz initially struggled to adapt after first moving to London. Scoring the winning goal in the 2021 Champions League final is an obvious and significant highlight, yet for all his evident technical quality, he never seemed a comfortable fit for any specific role – he lacked the acceleration to play out wide, was overpowered if played deeper and was too relenting in his creativity to be an outstanding No.10.

His versatility was as much a curse as it had first appeared a gift. A record of 32 goals and 15 assists across 139 appearances in all competitions for the Blues represented a disappointing return on a hefty investment.

Arsenal, at first, got more of the same – a tidy player but a curious choice for a £65m outlay. Then, in February of this year, his breakthrough came. Through a combination of injuries and the under-performance of Gabriel Jesus and Eddie Nketiah – the club's two recognised No.9s scored just nine Premier League goals between them last campaign – Havertz fell into the role. With hindsight, he seemed perfect for it all along.

> "Even as a youth player, you could see that he was one of the most talented boys ever to wear our jersey"
> **Bayer Leverkusen managing director of sport Simon Rolfes**

European champion ...Havertz celebrates scoring the winner against Manchester City in the 2021 Champions League final in Porto

"A lot of times, the players decide where they have to play," Arteta said after Havertz had begun to thrive as a No.9 last term. "You can have certain ideas, but then you see certain relationships and it flows. When it flows, you have to let it go."

And, boy, has it flowed. Havertz finished his debut season in North London with 13 league goals and seven assists. By the end of October, he was Arsenal's top scorer with seven goals in all competitions, with further statistics suggesting that he's enjoying the best form of his career. The 0.55 expected goals (xG) per 90 minutes he has averaged so far this season is a career high, and the 25-year-old also ranks among the very best Premier League forwards for shot-creating actions per 90 (2.99), progressive passes (3.38) and progressive passes received (six). ▶

Baby faced...Havertz in action for Germany Under-17s back in 2015

Key forwards... Havertz links well with Bukayo Saka

His invaluable defensive work from the front has been impressive, too. He ranks in the 97th percentile among forwards in England's top flight for clearances per 90 minutes (2.38), the 91st percentile for interceptions (0.5) and blocks (1.25), and the 85th percentile for tackles (0.88).

For how he often drops deep from the front line, rotating with Leandro Trossard and creating space for the likes of widemen Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli to threaten goal, Havertz is often characterised as a false nine. But there are elements of his game that conform much more to the profile of a traditional striker. Utilising his 6ft 4ins frame, for example, he is currently winning a career-best 4.25 aerial duels per 90.

Goal-getter... Havertz scores against Brighton

> Havertz is often characterised as a false nine. But there are elements of his game that conform much more to the profile of a traditional striker

"In his career he consistently became more offensively-oriented and was more and more cast in attacking roles," Anfang says. "In my opinion, in the time I worked with him, his style of play was best suited to play as playmaker or No.10, but he always had a great urge to score.

"He is also quite tall and has a knack for headers, so it does make sense to let him play as a centre-forward. He is a player who looks for many situations in and around the box and has many solutions in his bag. So I'm not surprised at all that he is excelling as a centre-forward."

"The fact that Kai is now playing

Aerial threat... Havertz heads Arsenal in front against PSG in the Champions League

Key man...Arteta celebrates with Havertz after another headed winner v Brentford

as a centre-forward at Arsenal only underlines how polyvalent he is and what a wide range of skills he has," Rolfes adds. "His goalscoring ability is special. He's a great striker, as he shows week in, week out."

So why didn't it work for him at Chelsea? Moving to a new country and assimilating to a new league couldn't have been easy during the height of the COVID pandemic. And perhaps the dysfunction that surrounded him at Stamford Bridge contributed to his struggles. There was a near-constant churn of team-mates and managers – he worked under three different coaches (Frank Lampard twice, Thomas Tuchel and Graham Potter) in his three seasons in West London.

Anfang is of the belief that Havertz's Chelsea travails have shaped the player he has become, that he has been strengthened by those experiences.

"It is extraordinary to see what he has achieved thus far," he says. "Maybe he still sometimes flies under the radar, but, for example, he already won the Champions League while scoring the deciding goal in the final against Manchester City. He left his home and went abroad at a young age and successfully made the transition to the Premier League, the most competitive league in the world. In my opinion, his path has been very successful.

"Maybe the recognition in Germany would be even bigger if he would have had these successes domestically, because the public eye is more focused on the Bundesliga. From my point of view, he has done exceptionally well in England and has exceeded expectations in his career."

"Kai was an almost complete player early on," Rolfes adds. "What makes him even more valuable today is his resilience. He has made extreme progress in this area. Kai stands up to every opponent. You can tell that he's become more aggressive as a footballer. He is very ambitious. For me, he's a world-class player who can and wants to keep improving."

The Roman philosopher Seneca once said that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Thanks to Havertz's preparedness and the chance Arteta gave him to lead the line, Arsenal have lucked into their ideal striker.

Silencing his critics...Havertz is enjoying a rich vein of form for Arsenal

Stamford Bridge struggles... Havertz's move to Chelsea didn't quite work out

> "He is very ambitious. For me, he's a world-class player who can and wants to keep improving"
> **Simon Rolfes**

Kai Havertz

the numbers game

GERMANY

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CAPS

GOALS
19

LEVERKUSEN'S RECORD SALES

€80m	**KAI HAVERTZ** *2020 (to Chelsea)*
€55m	**MOUSSA DIABY** *2023 (to Aston Villa)*
€32m	**LEON BAILEY** *2021 (to Aston Villa)*
€30m	**SON HEUNG-MIN** *2015 (to Tottenham Hotspur)*

FRITZ WALTER MEDAL WINNERS
(Germany's best young footballer)

- *2018* **KAI HAVERTZ** (Leverkusen)
- *2019* **NICOLAS-GERRIT KUHN** (Ajax)
- *2020* **NOAH KATTERBACH** (Cologne)
- *2021* **KARIM ADEYEMI** (Dortmund)
- *2022* **FLORIAN WIRTZ** (Leverkusen)
- *2023* **YOUSSOUFA MOUKOKO** (Dortmund)

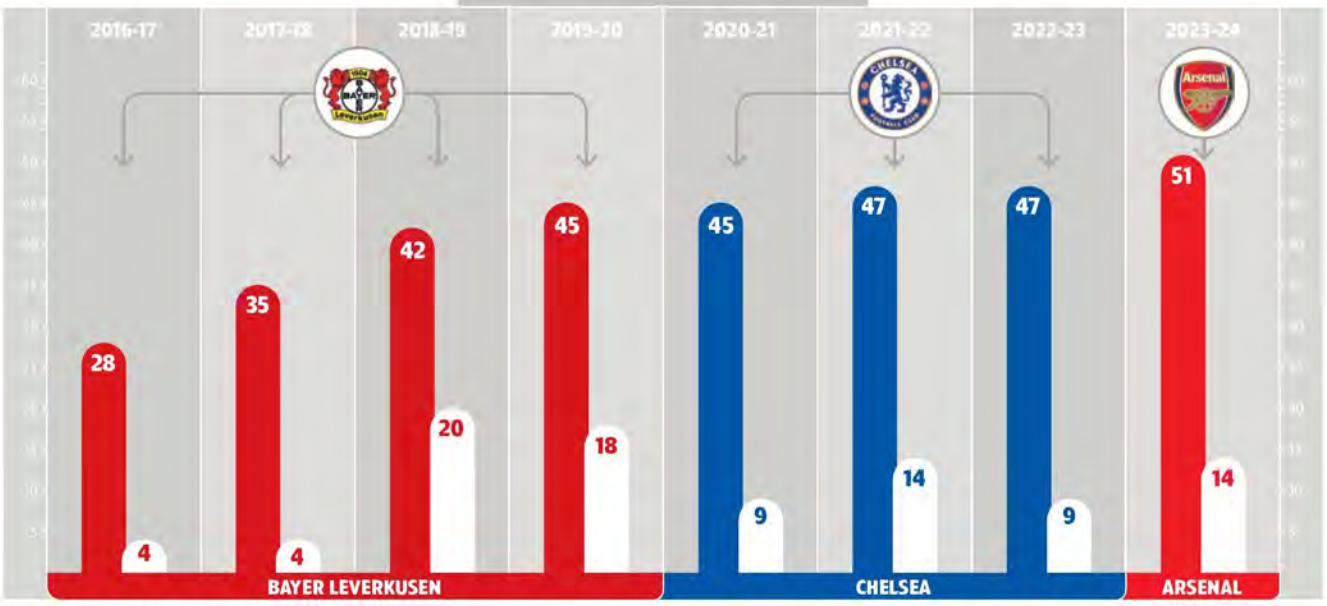
BAYER LEVERKUSEN'S YOUNGEST-EVER PLAYERS

1. **Ken IZEKOR** 16 years, 204 days, *December 2023*
2. **Zidan SERTDEMIR** 16 years, 276 days, *November 2021*
3. **Iker BRAVO** 16 years, 298 days, *November 2021*
4. **Florian WIRTZ** 17 years, 15 days, *May 2020*
5. **Kai HAVERTZ** 17 years, 126 days, *October 2016*

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL MATCH-WINNERS

19

Players to have scored the only goal in a European Cup/Champions League final. Havertz became the 17th in 2021



■ GAMES ▢ GOALS *(stats correct up to 08.11.24)*

CATANIA

The Sicilian club is at the start of a new journey under new Australian owners – and Serie A is the planned destination

MCO FILES

Club:
Catania FC
Owners:
Elefante 1946 Pty Ltd (Pelligra Group)
MCO connections:
Pelligra Group also owns Australian A-League franchise Perth Glory, and Ross Pelligra is on the board of Al Ittifaq, a second-tier club in Dubai
Player connections:
So far, no official direct moves but Catania forward Gabriel Popovic was briefly with Perth Glory between 2019-20

Ambitious...Catania players celebrate after scoring

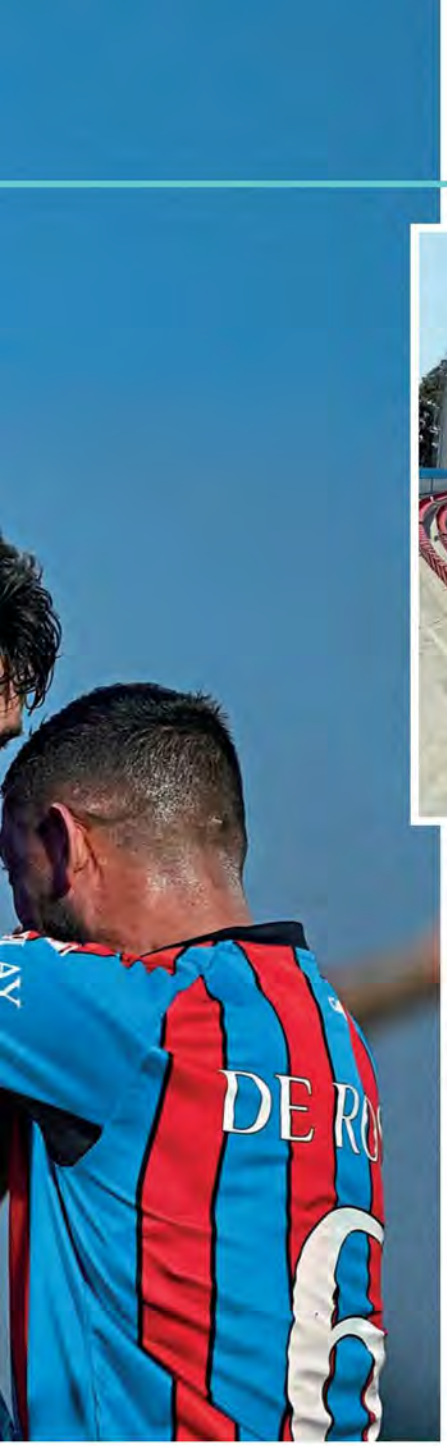
Sicily may only have a population of five million people, but three of the 13 most populous cities in Italy are on the island. Nestled in the shadow of the still active Mount Etna volcano, Catania is the tenth biggest city by population and boasts a long, proud but fragmented football history.

There are five clubs playing in Serie A this season with a smaller average attendance than the 18,000 who have been routinely attending the city's Stadio Angelo Massimino to watch the club try to get out of the third tier of Italian football.

The origins of professional football in Catania date back to 1908 and the club has spent 17 seasons in Serie A – most recently in 2013-14 – but halcyon days were often interrupted by numerous financial crises.

That is hardly uncommon in Italian football. But after the last relegation from Serie A, then-owner Antonino Pulvirenti admitted to fixing five matches in 2014-15 and making pay-offs of €500,000 to try to keep the club in Serie B. Catania subsequently went into another decline that would prove terminal.

After a mooted offer for the club by a group of investors fronted by American lawyer Joe Tacopina failed to materialise in January 2021, the club was declared insolvent by



Christmas and ignominiously kicked out of Serie C in April 2022 without completing their fixtures.

The city's local council, which owns the 28,000-capacity stadium, subsequently organised a competition to start a new club. Five bids were received, and Australian property developer Ross Pelligra proved the surprise winner.

Pelligra's previous involvements in football had all been in Australia. In 2019, he backed National Premier League side South Melbourne FC and made a bid for Adelaide United before sealing the Catania deal, only to pull out saying that the deal for the A-League franchise did not "commercially make sense."

Pelligra's sporting empire is also not restricted to football. The Adelaide Giants baseball team and the city's basketball franchise, the Lightning, are already under the group's control, which is developing the home and training centres of Netball South Australia and the Adelaide 36ers' National Basketball League side.

Catania is a long way from Pelligra's Melbourne base but his mother is Sicilian and multi-club ownership is common in Italy, where 25 clubs have owners or significant shareholders with stakes in other sides. Only England, the United States and Spain have more clubs in MCO, and Sicily even has another. Palermo, the island's biggest city, is part of the ultimate MCO, Abu Dhabi-owned City Football Group.

After the takeover, Pelligra was installed as president with former Socceroos midfielder Vince Grella taking over as chief executive officer. Grella played in Italy between 1998 and 2008 for Empoli, Ternana (on loan), Parma and Torini, before seeing out his career in England with Blackburn Rovers and briefly back home with Melbourne Heart. Another famous Socceroo, Mark Bresciano, who made over 100 appearances for Palermo between 2006 and 2010, also joined the Catania board.

Catania's home ground...Stadio Angelo Massimino
Credit: Catania FC

Welcome to Catania ...an image of owner Ross Pelligra inside Catania's ground

The head coach... Domenico Toscano

Bresciano and Grella were part of the famous Australia side that reached the last 16 of the 2006 World Cup in Germany, only to be eliminated by Italy with a stoppage-time penalty by Francesco Totti. Among the substitutes that day was Tony Popovic, whose son Gabriel joined Catania in 2023 from Rudes in Croatia and has since had a loan spell with US Fiorenzuola, now in Serie D.

After the old Catania side collapsed, the entire workforce were made redundant and the bulk of the players signed by the new team since 2022 have come from other sides in the professional ranks. The reformed club was re-entered into the fourth tier Serie D and in 2022-23 cruised to promotion 31 points ahead of second-placed Locri.

> Attendances are strong and memberships have reached 12,873, reflecting an historic but demanding supporter base including a significant cohort of ultras

Moving up to Group C (South) of Serie C proved more of a challenge and Catania finished 13th, just two points clear of the relegation play-offs, but Pelligra's attention had been partly taken up by another opportunity to expand his MCO portfolio closer to home.

Perth Glory were without an owner after chairman Tony Sage surrendered the franchise in July 2023, leaving the task of finding new owners to the Australian Professional League, which had financial problems of its own. As a result, Pelligra was able to snap up a club once valued at A$15 million for what has been rumoured to be a nominal fee.

Catania's ultras ...graffiti inside Catania's ground

Pelligra took over the Glory in February 2024 and has promised to put in funding of A$4m per season.

With the Perth deal done, the focus returned to Catania. Over the summer, Cristiano Lucarelli was replaced as head coach by Domenico Toscano, who has won promotion from Serie C on five previous occasions, most recently with Cesena, where he won the Group B (Centre) title in 2023-24 by a convincing 21 points.

There has not been any movement between Australia and Europe so far, but more experienced players have been added to the squad.

Lithuanian goalkeeper Marius Adamonis, who spent 2023-24 at Perugia on loan from Lazio, joined along with experienced Italian players such as midfielders Stefano Sturaro and Luca Verna, both in their 30s and whose previous clubs include Juventus and Pisa respectively.

Attendances are strong and memberships have reached 12,873, reflecting an historic but demanding supporter base including a significant cohort of ultras, such as Falange D'Assalto in the stadium's Curva Sud and Essere Ultras and Stazione Clan in the Curva Nord.

Although there have been a couple of instances of disruption this season, crowds have generally been well-behaved, boosted by a good start to Serie C, where the main competition for promotion is expected to come from Audace Cerignola, Avellino, Benevento and Potenza.

Promotion is essential, as life in the Italian third tier is difficult. Catania's neighbours and Serie C rivals Messina were put up for sale in the summer of 2022 for just €1, but the division's tough economics led to little serious interest. While Sky Italia broadcasts Serie C, the money is not large and three years ago the league agreed a deal to sell live betting data from the stadia.

The structure of Serie C makes getting out of the Italian third tier harder, arguably, than winning promotion into the top tier from Serie B. There are 60 clubs playing in three regional leagues in Serie C, but only the winners are guaranteed promotion and the six clubs finishing second and third must fight it out in the play-offs for the fourth and final promotion place.

With an experienced coach and squad, Catania will be among the favourites as Ross Pelligra looks to continue his revitalisation of the club.

Facetoface

"Serie A is just a matter of time"

ROSS PELLIGRA, CATANIA OWNER

Why did you buy Catania?
Buying Catania was driven by two things: my personal connection to Sicily, and my belief in the power of football to shape communities. My family's from Catania, so it's close to my heart. But more than that, sport is a vehicle for positive change – it brings people together, supports mental health, and creates opportunities. I want to be part of something that gives back to the people of Catania and brings camaraderie to the local community.

How often are you able to attend Catania matches?
I'm in Italy about once a month, where I like to spend two weeks at a time visiting different cities. I make it to around 50 per cent of the matches. Being there in person is important to me – not just for the football, but to stay connected with the fans, the club and the community.

You now own/control two football clubs. Do you want to buy any more clubs to build a multi-club portfolio?
Definitely. We're working on building a portfolio of clubs across different regions. It's about creating a network where we can share resources, talent and ideas, while keeping each club's identity and its connection to the local community intact. The future of football is global, and we're looking to be part of that.

What synergies are there between Catania and Perth? Do you expect to move players and staff between the clubs?
Yes sure, we're implementing similar youth academy and female participation models at both Catania and Perth Glory, and we see that expanding as we add more clubs to the group. It's all about developing talent and providing opportunities for players and staff to learn and grow within the network.

Catania were last in Italy's top flight in 2013-14. What will it take to bring the club back to Serie A?
It's going to take hard work, commitment and belief from everyone – players, staff, fans. But with the team we're building, and with the consistent support from our incredible fanbase, I'm confident we'll get back there. The spirit of Catania is strong, and we're on the right path. It's just a matter of time.

MARKO STAMENIC

"It was a special thing to come to Serbia and connect with my roots"

The New Zealand international, signed by Nottingham Forest in the summer, discusses his time with FC Copenhagen, Red Star Belgrade and his current loan at Olympiacos

You spent nearly three years in Denmark with FC Copenhagen. How do you look back on that period of your career?
I spent a long time in Copenhagen and I was very grateful for what they have done for me. FC Copenhagen is a big club and I'm happy that I got the chance there to play in the Champions League, which was an amazing experience. In the beginning it was, of course, difficult. There were moments of adversity, when I had to adapt and mature very quickly. Moving away from home for the first time in my life, to the complete other side of the world, was very difficult for me.

But luckily I had really good people around me, who helped me to adapt to Denmark really quickly. I was able to focus on football. I was very fortunate to see my family every six months, which really helped me, gave me motivation to continue to achieve my goals.

For the first six months I stayed with a host family. They were amazing. They were like my second family and I still keep in contact with them. After those six months I moved out and stayed on my own, and a year-and-a-half later I started living with my girlfriend, who also helped me a lot, introduced me to her friends and that's how I made a life there.

You then joined Serbian champions Red Star Belgrade in 2023. Why did you choose to take that next step in your career?
I just wanted to take a next step into something I wasn't so comfortable with. Red Star is a huge club as well. My father is from Serbia and I said many times before that I thought it would be a special thing to come here and connect with my roots, learn the language and the culture, meet some family that I have never met before – along with obviously the football being very good. They play Champions League and you get to represent one of the biggest clubs in the world.

Were you happy with your performances last season?
I think that I'm probably harder on myself than anyone. I always look at every game, no matter if it's big or small, I always criticise myself on the things I think I could do better. During last season I had my ups and downs, but that's football and that's life. You have to be able to cope with that and learn from that. But all in all, I am very satisfied with the season – not only for myself, but for the team and for the club.

Last season Red Star finished bottom of their Champions League group with only one point. You can't have been happy with that?
That's true. We should have achieved much better results. We were all disappointed, not so much with the performances, but we should have done much more. Although I'm no longer with Red Star, I'm happy that they qualified for the new Champions League season and I want them to be successful.

How would you compare the Serbian league with the Danish league?
The level of the leagues are very similar. I think that Red Star as a whole, the fans, the atmosphere, is nothing to compare with. It's unbelievable, especially the derbies [against arch-rivals Partizan Belgrade]. It's a really special thing to be able to experience it and I'm really grateful to have that experience in my pocket.

How did you adjust to life in Belgrade?
I really enjoyed Belgrade. I can feel that it runs in my blood with the mentality of people. I'm very fortunate that I had the opportunity to meet family that I have never met before, from my dad's side. They helped me a lot with my ➤

NEW ZEALAND
FOOTBALL

All Whites international... Stamenic playing against the United States in September

introduction to Serbia, which was really nice.

There was a funny story after the last derby. When I was driving back home, at a roundabout two cars cut me off. I was thinking "Oh, no", but in fact it was Red Star fans. They came out of their cars, jumping around and screaming: "Stamenic Marko!" celebrating the derby win. We stopped traffic for about ten minutes, to take photos and to have a conversation. It was really funny, something that will stay in my memory forever.

In an earlier interview, you said that your goal is to one day play in the Premier League. How did last summer's move to Nottingham Forest come about?

I didn't think about leaving Red Star but when the club received a good offer for me, and as it was from a Premier League club, I was happy to accept – both the transfer and the loan deal to Olympiacos.

Breakthrough...Stamenic in UEFA Champions League action for Copenhagen during the 2022-23 season

At this moment, I am focused on doing well with Olympiacos, and of course I'm looking forward next season to be with Nottingham Forest. The Premier League is the best league in the world and I would like to compete with the best in the world. That's where I see myself.

How have you adapted to Olympiacos and what are your impressions of the Greek league?

I've had time to adapt to the club environment, including new staff and players. They have all welcomed me in so well. Not only helping me with football, but with every aspect outside of it, making the transition much easier.

My impressions about Olympiacos are very positive. You instantly see a family-like culture within the club. Everybody wants to win and succeed, which resonates exactly with my

Champions League pedigree...Stamenic battles Manchester City midfielder Matheus Nunes

visions and goals. I believe the league is strong and competitive. We have seen from the other games that the underdogs can get results, which shows the level of the league. However, I have full belief in our squad and the people around the club that we can – and we must – win trophies for our fans this season.

After Copenhagen and Belgrade, you are now resident of another big European city. How do you like Athens?
Obviously Athens is a global attraction all over the world, so to live here is a privilege. My family came to see me when I first arrived in Athens and they instantly fell in love with the country. From the culture, the food and people, they adore everything about Greece.

New Zealand's national team is currently 95th in the FIFA rankings. What do you make of the current situation and the prospects for the future?
It's complex. A lot of fans invest a lot of their efforts into rugby, so it's really difficult for them to be able to turn towards football and to see the changes that have been made in the last two, three years. If you look at our team, it's a young team. The generation that is coming through now is really very good. Obviously the results will be coming. We have the World Cup to look forward to. I think that we will be competing there, touch wood. Our coach is really influencing us to play modern football. He is trying to reinvent our football identity. I think it's a really attractive style of play and I believe that we have a huge potential to do well at the World Cup.

> "I believe that we'll be at the World Cup"

For the 2026 World Cup, the Oceania Football Confederation has a guaranteed berth for the first time ever. This means that New Zealand will be huge favourites to qualify. Still, what do you think? Which of the other teams could have an outside chance?
As I said, I believe that we'll be at the World Cup. We came quite close to qualifying for the last World Cup, but we lost in the play-off game 1-0 to Costa Rica. It was supposed to be a tie with a home and away game but, due to COVID, there was only one match at a neutral venue in Qatar. We dominated the whole game, but they scored an early goal and after that they only defended.

As for the upcoming qualifiers, of course we'll take all matches seriously. I think that the Solomon Islands will give us a good run for our money. I remember them being a tough opponent, not only at senior level, but also at youth level. We had difficult times in our Under-17 World Cup qualifiers against them. They have good players. They just lack quality facilities, they are unfortunate with that.

Interview by Vladimir Novak

World Cup heartbreak... Stamenic reacts to the 2022 play-off defeat to Costa Rica

BJORN JOHNSEN

"I've tried to see the world as much as possible"

After a career stretching across 15 clubs, nine countries and three continents, the Norwegian striker sits down with *World Soccer* to discuss his nomadic career

How does the reality of life as a footballer compare to what you dreamed of growing up?
It's been everything I hoped it would be. I've enjoyed my career. It's been a roller-coaster ride, of course, but I would never regret anything that's happened, from the first moment up until now. I've tried to see the world as much as possible. Different experiences. Different countries. Different people. Different cultures. Different football. Finding my feet and learning on the fly has definitely been my strength.

You've played for clubs in nine different countries so far. What effect has that had on your life away from the pitch?
At the start it's very difficult to meet new people when you don't speak the language, but I've been with my wife Veronica for nine years now. She's been very important when it comes to feeling at home and that I'm never alone. Our son is definitely seeing and learning new things. I speak four languages – Spanish, Portuguese, Norwegian and English – and I'm learning French. It's different for every player, but we never wanted to just be in one place.

At the start of your career, you went to play in the lower leagues of Spain and Portugal. How did that happen? At that stage, did you have any doubts about reaching the levels you have?
I was playing for a Norwegian team called Valerenga. I went out on loan, then I came back and said: "Look, I want to do my own thing." I went to Spain and tried to make it as a footballer in the third division there. Those were really hard times with not very much money. Some people get directly to the top, but I had a very long, hard run where I had to play in small teams that nobody knows and push my way into the limelight.

Scoring a lot of goals in Portugal helped me flourish and end up at Hearts after playing in Bulgaria. I just knew that, whatever opportunity I got, I needed to make the best of it.

At ADO Den Haag, you scored 19 goals in 2017-18 to finish as the Eredivisie's second-highest scorer. Why did things work out so well for you there?
I felt like I had a point to prove. I was sick to the stomach at leaving Hearts, a club I really loved, and having to start over. I wanted to show them the qualities I had. That fuelled me for the start of the season and then, once you start getting those goals, it gives you confidence.

Feeling the love brings out the best in you. I scored against PSV and Ajax. They were playing in the Champions League and I was on their level. All the players who were fighting for the Golden Boot were spurring each other on. It's funny, I thought I'd won it by scoring two goals in the last game, but the other guy [Iranian Alireza Jahanbakhsh of AZ] scored three to beat me!

You worked with Arne Slot, the new Liverpool manager, during your time at AZ. What was he like?
He was probably the person I learned the most from. He was the assistant manager in my first year at AZ, but he took all the training. His sessions were the best I've ever had and definitely made me a better player. He helped me see the game in a broader way.

He's a very good coach and very good at managing people. He's very human – he gave me a week off to go and get married during pre-season. Small things are important and he's just so in tune with every little detail. If you're not on top of your game, he asks: "Are you okay? Did something happen at home?" He sees everything.

You won the AFC Champions League with Ulsan Hyundai in 2020. What did that success mean to you and the club?
I got a lot of stick for going to Asia, but those people didn't know that this was a big club with real aspirations. When I signed, I met the president. He shook my hand and said: "Bjorn, we're going to win the league this year and the Champions League next year." That's what the expectation was. I hadn't won anything on a team level up until that point.

That was an amazing time, especially with everything that was happening all over the world with COVID. Everyone was freaked out and I was still enjoying my football. It was a special year and the biggest trophy I've won in my career.

At international level, you were eligible to play for the USA and Norway. How did you end up choosing Norway?
In 2017, Bruce Arena came to watch me and Perry Kitchen play against Rangers. We won 4-1 and I played really well. I felt I'd done enough but I wasn't in the squad, so I was a little bit frustrated. At the end of the season, ➤

Saputo

Career highlight... Johnsen vies for the ball with Spain legend Sergio Busquets

I played against Celtic, who had gone unbeaten that year. I didn't know that there were Norwegian scouts there, but I got a call from the national team coach, Lars Lagerback, who asked if I was interested in playing for Norway. It had been one of my dreams since watching them beat Brazil at the 1998 World Cup, so I was ecstatic. I'd told my dad that, either way, I was going to choose whoever called first. I had ties to both sides, but I felt more of a pull towards Norway.

What would you pick out as the highlights of your international career?
We played an amazing 3-3 draw at home against Sweden and I scored the first goal. That was a classic derby game and probably my favourite. My best was against the Faroe Islands, where I scored twice, but the level of competition wasn't the highest.

We also played Spain at the Mestalla, and my wife is from Valencia, so that was special. I won the penalty that we scored to equalise. They won 2-1 but you cherish those moments.

> "Scoring goals here in Georgia, my phone has been ringing non-stop"

How did it feel to play with a creative midfielder like Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard?
I saw him when he was so much younger and playing in the Netherlands. His evolution has been amazing. He was under contract at Real Madrid, but they were calling him a flop and saying he wasn't good enough. He went through that and still had the strength and wherewithal to make it at Arsenal.

I played up top with Erling Haaland as well. Playing with those two superstars of Norwegian football is definitely a proud moment for me. I'm just happy to see them doing well.

As a fellow striker, what do you think makes Haaland so special?
His complete desire and willingness to do whatever it takes to score. A lot of players get angry when they're not involved but he's figured out that it doesn't matter if he only touches the ball once or twice in the whole game as long as he scores. That's the maturity of a striker and he's learned it very quickly. His physique and his strength too. He's almost a gladiator. A Viking. It's very pleasing that we have that level of player in Norway

Asian champion... Johnsen hit five goals for Ulsan Hyundai en route to the 2020 AFC Champions League

and, worldwide, it helps us get the respect we deserve.

How did your latest move, to Torpedo Kutaisi in Georgia, come about? What interested you about it?
To be honest, I had no idea about this club. I was actually thinking of returning to the Netherlands or Asia but I got a call from the manager, Steve Kean, who had been here for a year. He was looking for a striker and he knew me from my time in Asia. He convinced me of the project – I would be the main focal point and I would play every game.

This team is really focused on winning the league, which I've never done, so that intrigued me. They were playing in Europe and wanted to build a team with players who had that experience, like Mamadou Sakho. We didn't get through to the Europa Conference League this year, but we were very close.

How would you assess your time in Georgia so far?
I never thought I'd be living in Kutaisi, but it's a new experience. My wife and I are very relaxed and settled here. It's a small city and very family oriented. We're here for a reason, to help the club grow and make sure that people see them again, because they have a big history back in the days of the Soviet Union.

I'm very comfortable under the manager. We won the Super Cup against Dinamo Tbilisi and I think we're in a good place right now. The club finished third last season, I'm doing well and scoring goals, so everyone's happy with me.

How would you describe the standard and style of play in the Georgian top flight?
The players aren't as strong, but technically they're very good. Almost every game is difficult for us because we play against teams with five at the back, or that press high. It's definitely not as easy as I thought it would be, which was a pleasant surprise.

There are ten teams in the league and five of them are very high-level, but they have this mentality that they can't get through to the group stages of European competitions. I think that's why they're coefficient is so low, but there are good players coming out of this league and playing all over Europe. The national team has done wonders for Georgia's reputation. We're trying to make sure that grows as time goes on.

What did you make of Georgia's impressive showing at the Euros?
People here were celebrating as if they'd won the tournament! It makes me envious because I want Norway to have that same experience on the biggest stage. I was very happy for them. There's still a long way for the team and the league to go, but they're making the right steps.

We came here to give the league more publicity and we're in the right moment to help them. I think now you'll maybe see more scouts looking at the players here. There's a teenage striker at Dinamo Tbilisi [Vakhtang Salia, who will join Newcastle United when he turns 18 next summer] who scored against us.

What do you hope to achieve with Torpedo Kutaisi, both this season and beyond?
I'm 33 so I'm getting to the age where I need to settle. I maybe have two or three years left before I start thinking about going back home. Scoring goals here in Georgia, my phone has been ringing non-stop, but right now, I'm just focusing on the team and the results. Making sure we're in the right position to win the league and try to win the Golden Boot. The best thing you can do is focus on where you are and what you're doing. Do your job well, get results and the rest will come.

Interview by Sean Cole

Target man... Johnsen battles for a header in the Europa League for Rosenborg

JULIANO SCHMELING

"Vanuatu can be a big force"

Vanuatu's Brazilian head coach discusses his background in futsal and dreaming of World Cup qualification

You have worked across the Pacific for FIFA and the Oceania Football Confederation for over a decade, but only now have taken on a job as a national coach. Why now?
I was very familiar with the region as I had been doing coach education, high performance and development in the region. I knew the reality of all the countries as we only have 11 countries in the region. At the beginning of this year, two jobs came up for a national coach in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. I applied for both through the normal process and got this one.

You have a lot of experience in futsal. How has that helped now you are focused on football?
I worked in football in the region too and also that was my background in Brazil. People sometimes in Oceania think that futsal is my background, but I have been a coach for 23 years and been dealing with both. But I have been at two futsal World Cups with the Solomon Islands. The first as a technical advisor in Thailand in 2012 and then as head coach in Colombia in 2016. To be honest it helped me a lot; it's a different format, a different sport, but it helped me a lot in terms of managing players, strategies, development and tactical training.

After just six months, you took Vanuatu to the final of the OFC Nations Cup for the very first time. How important was home advantage last summer?
It was amazing as we started out at home and went to the final and the environment between the players, fans and the media grew as we went along up to the final game. It was a great achievement for the players and the nation, the first time in their history.

OFC have introduced a different format for the group stage of the World Cup qualifiers. Home and away matches have been replaced by three single games, one in Vanuatu then two in New Zealand. Is this better or worse?
For me it would be better to have home and away games. Every coach would like to have home and away. Without that, maybe if you don't have all the best players available, then now you don't get a second chance. It's just three games. It's important to start at home in Vanuatu [a 4-1 victory against Samoa], then we have two games in New Zealand [against the Kiwis and Tahiti] and we need to win two of these three games to go through.

Australia, before they left for the Asian Football Confederation in 2006, and now New Zealand have dominated the OFC region for years. Now, there is a chance for the runners-up to progress to the inter-confederational play-offs for the first time. How important is this?
New Zealand is still ahead of every single country here, so the chance for the runners-up to go through to this second mini-tournament and also have a chance to qualify for the World Cup is an amazing opportunity for every country in the Pacific. It's huge.

Apart from New Zealand, most of the other teams in the OFC region are closely matched. How can you make a difference with Vanuatu?
I had some experience in Vanuatu before I came here but I was still shocked when I saw the state of the clubs. The first step is to invest in the local competition and the local clubs and then there will be a big difference. This development is only just beginning, and the clubs are only now starting out at youth level. If they keep investing at that level, then in five to ten years Vanuatu can be a big force.

Unlike most of your Pacific rivals, football – rather than rugby union or league – is the number one sport in Vanuatu. Is this helpful?
In Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Papua New Guinea, rugby is very strong and rugby here is very small, so that doesn't affect us but, in some ways, this can help those countries as people are growing sport and they have more of a structure for development, more facilities and infrastructure. In the Solomon Islands, there were more rugby fields for development, and we could use those for football.

Some other countries in the Pacific are recruiting players from the diaspora overseas – is this something that Vanuatu want to do?
It's definitely something that many countries around the world are doing now and Vanuatu need to explore this more. At the moment, we have one player who has been identified in Australia [FK Beograd centre-back Jared Clark] who is helping us, and we need to do this more. Our first opponents in the World Cup qualifiers, Samoa, have many players from outside.

Your captain, Brian Kaltak, has won the A-League and the AFC Cup with Central Coast Mariners. How central is he to Vanuatu?
Brian is a very important person to Vanuatu. We are lucky just to have one person with his experience. Everyone knows his achievements and respects that and we try to involve him as much as possible when he is here.

Some foreign coaches in the Pacific choose to fly in and out. Are you living locally?
When I accepted this challenge, it was on a full-time basis, and I am here with my family.

And how long will you stay in Vanuatu?
I only signed up for this year. I came for the Nations Cup and the start of the World Cup qualifiers and then I have to do an assessment. So, I have to do that and then we will see.

Interview by Steve Menary

Credit: OFC Media via Phototek NZ4

SOUTH AFRICA

Soweto derby... Orlando Pirates v Kaizer Chiefs is South Africa's most famous fixture

2024-25 TEAMS

- AmaZulu
- Cape Town City
- Chippa United
- Kaizer Chiefs
- Lamontville Golden Arrows
- Magesi
- Mamelodi Sundowns
- Marumo Gallants
- Orlando Pirates
- Polokwane City
- Richards Bay
- Royal AM
- Sekhukhune United
- Stellenbosch
- SuperSport United
- TS Galaxy

PREMIER SOCCER LEAGUE – A BRIEF HISTORY

The legacy of Apartheid has ensured a complicated sporting history in South Africa. Professional football kicked off in 1959, but it was reserved for whites only. Attempts by the subjugated black population to get their own league underway were stymied until 1971. In 1977, the two leagues merged and football in South Africa has been played free of racial restrictions since then, even though the segregation political system was only dismantled in the early 1990s. The league was rebranded as the Premier Soccer League in 1996 when the season was switched from February-November to follow the European model of August-May.

THE FORMAT

Since 2002, there have been 16 top-flight clubs and the same number in the second tier, with a home-and-away format giving each club 30 league games per season. The top eight finishers compete in a cup competition at the start of the following season. The bottom club is automatically relegated and the top team in the second division promoted. The team finishing second from bottom in the top flight plays a three-team promotion-relegation play-off with teams two and three from the second tier to decide one place in the top tier for the following season.

HONOURS BOARD*

Club	*Title wins*	*Runners-up*	*Last title*
Mamelodi Sundowns	14	3	2023-24
Orlando Pirates	4	9	2011-12
Kaizer Chiefs	4	5	2014-15
SuperSport United	3	2	2009-10
Bidvest Wits	1	1	2016–17
Manning Rangers	1	0	1996–97
Santos	1	0	2000-01

**Since 1996 and the Premier Soccer League's formation only*

Are the deep pockets of billionaire Patrice Motsepe killing the South African league?
For the last seven seasons, Mamelodi Sundowns have won the championship in an unprecedented streak of success and indicative of their massive resources. The club was bought by mining billionaire Patrice Motsepe two decades ago and his profligate spending has seen them evolve, slowly at first, into a powerhouse that no other domestic side can come close to challenging.

Motsepe has since become Confederation of African Football (CAF) president and stays away from matches, but it remains a family business with his youthful son now in charge. Last season, they took the title by a record 23 points (it had been 16 the season before) and were 30 minutes away from becoming the first team to ever finish a South African league season unbeaten, before losing their last game.

Sundowns' envious playing resources means the title race has been a foregone conclusion almost from the start of the season and predictability of the outcome impacts on supporter interest. Without salary caps or spending restrictions, Sundowns should continue to have the upper hand for a while to come.

Will giants Kaizer Chiefs rise again?
Kaizer Chiefs are comfortably the best-supported club in the country, with their fans dominating the stands for both home and away matches. But it has been nine seasons since they last won a trophy in a frustrating drought that has seen all their record-breaking achievements long since bettered by Sundowns. Chiefs no longer enjoy the clout they once held in the transfer market as Sundowns have been beating them to all the best talent, plus they have not helped themselves with some poor purchases in recent years.

ONE TO WATCH

Relebohile MOFOKENG

(Orlando Pirates)

A stark media spotlight means there is a long list of promising players who have burst onto the scene in the South African league only to quickly wilt and fade under the weight of expectation. The 19-year-old Mofokeng is the latest sensation who his club will be hoping does not befall the same fate. He looks to have a bright future given his prodigious talent, primarily as a left-sided attacker. He scored a sensational winner in last season's cup final victory over Mamelodi Sundowns in June and won his first cap for South Africa in the World Cup qualifiers just weeks later.

Dominant force ...Sundowns are presented a trophy by their owner, CAF president Patrice Motsepe (L)

A tenth-place finish last season was their worst ever.

This season, however, they have invested more than ever before in new players and a new coach: the Belgian-Tunisian Nasreddine Nabi, who has had a journeyman career around Africa over the last decade. Chiefs supporters are always hopeful when a new season kicks off but have the habit of quickly abandoning their side when they drop behind in the title race.

Can television spectators be turned into regular stadium attendees?
The South African league has a lucrative television deal with satellite broadcaster SuperSport – money that helps the clubs immeasurably because of generally poor attendances. It has always been a bizarre phenomenon that while live games on TV (they are all broadcast) draw high audience figures, actual attendance in the stadiums is low. The sport is the most popular in the country, but most clubs lose money at the gate. It has been like that for decades.

The fabled Soweto derby between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates fills the 90,000-odd seats at Johannesburg's Soccer City twice a season because it is a must-be-seen-at event, but there are often matches with fewer than 1,000 spectators. The league spends no money on marketing, as the club owners prefer not to dilute their share of the television income.

Can the talent in the league sustain the South Africa national team?
Almost all the successful African national teams draw their players from clubs in Europe. However, top-end salaries in South Africa mean that there is much less incentive for the country's footballers to go overseas than there would be for players from other parts of Africa. It has been argued that the national team, *Bafana Bafana*, suffers as a consequence because they do not have players competing regularly in top leagues in Europe. But this was debunked at the Africa Cup of Nations finals in the Ivory Coast earlier this year when South Africa finished third with a squad that had only a handful of overseas-based players. The bulk of the starting line-up was made up of players from Sundowns, who have been perennial contenders for the African Champions League since they won the trophy in 2016. They know their way around continental competition.

Mark Gleeson

Glenn Moore

Corinthians crowned queens of South America

Brazil's dominance of the Copa Libertadores Femenina continues, while other continental championships continue across the globe

South American champions...Brazil's Corinthians lift the Copa Libertadores Femenina trophy

With Brazil gearing up to host the 2027 World Cup, it was appropriate that their hegemony of the Copa Libertadores Femenina continued with Corinthians retaining their title. The Sao Paulo giants beat Colombia's Santa Fe 2-0, a repeat of the 2021 final, but there were signs that the continental dominance of Brazilian clubs is not as absolute as it had been trending.

Brazilian clubs have won all six competitions since the competition was expanded to 16 teams in 2019 despite none being held in Brazil (unlike Europe's Champions League, this remains a single-venue tournament with Paraguay hosting this year as a late replacement for Uruguay). Corinthians have collected four titles, Palmeiras and Ferroviaria one apiece.

The apogee was last year when Corinthians beat Palmeiras in the final with Internacional also making the last four. Brazilian teams played 14 matches against clubs from other countries and won all except the third-place play-off, scoring 58 goals and conceding 11.

But this year, for the first time since 2020, a Brazilian team failed to progress from the group stage, as Ferroviaria went out after drawing all three matches.

Boca Juniors then knocked out Santos on penalties after a goalless draw. The Argentine champions had held Corinthians 0-0 in the group stage but in the semi-final the holders beat them thanks to a 59th-minute goal from veteran Gabi Zanotti. The 39-year-old, who finished the tournament as top scorer with five goals, was not among the six Corinthians players in Brazil's Olympic silver medal-winning squad.

In total, 13 Corinthians players have been called up by Brazil this year, indicating the club's depth, but four other domestic clubs had representation in the Olympic squad, testament to the league's strength in an era when Spanish and US-based clubs are forever seeking to pick off the best South American talent.

Corinthians will be one of the teams likely to feature in FIFA's Women's Club World Cup, proposed for early 2026 with 16 teams involved. Other details of the quadrennial event, announced in May, remain sketchy but it is unlikely to meet with the opposition the men's version is encountering even if some of Europe's bigger teams will be wary of the added workload.

More significant will be the exposure such a tournament would give to what remains a developing sport, especially outside Europe and North America. While the UEFA Champions League began in 2001 (as the UEFA Women's Cup) and the Copa Libertadores dates back to 2009, elsewhere such competitions are in their infancy.

> Corinthians will be one of the teams likely to feature in FIFA's Women's Club World Cup, proposed for early 2026

The Asian and CONCACAF versions are enjoying their inaugural seasons while Africa's CAF Women's Champions League, though in its fourth iteration, still has teething problems. Although the hosts qualify automatically, and the other qualifiers were all known by early September, the location for this year's competition was only determined on October 15 with the event scheduled to start less than a month later and the final slated for November 23.

Upset...Manchester City striker Khadija Shaw scores in a 2-0 win over Barcelona

The venue, as in 2022, was Morocco with Pretoria-based holders Mamelodi Sundowns and hosts AS FAR, of Rabat, the favourites. Between them they had won the previous three finals and were the event's only ever-presents. DR Congo's TP Mazembe were making their second appearance while the other five finalists were all debutants: Cairo's FC Masar (Egypt), Aigles de la Medina from Dakar's suburbs (Senegal), CBE of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Edo Queens (Nigeria) and UWC Ladies, from the University of the Western Cape (South Africa).

Prize money of US$400,000 for the winners ($250,000 for the runners-up) is valuable but well below the rewards on offer in Asia's new AFC Women's Champions League, where the winners will bank $1.3 million, the runners-up $800,000 and semi-finalists $300,000. Just qualifying for the 12-team group stage was worth $100,000.

That round was held in October, played in hubs in China, Thailand and Vietnam. Attendances were modest – eight matches attracted less than 200 while only three drew more than 1,097 spectators, peaking with 1,097 to see Ho Chi Minh City host Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds. Red Diamonds won that 2-0 to secure Group C and a home draw in the March quarter-finals. The Vietnamese team will also be at home in the last eight as the best group runners-up.

Melbourne City and Korea's Incheon Red Angels won the other groups while Abu Dhabi Country Club, Wuhan Jiangda, Iran's Ban Khatoon and Taichung Blue

Whale of Chinese Taipei also qualified.

Most games were reasonably close, though Red Diamonds' 17-0 demolition of Indian club Odisha (with 11 different goalscorers) and Wuhan's 7-0 drubbing of Malaysian outfit Sabah highlighted the disparity in women's football development across Asia. Only Odisha, however, failed to pick up at least one point.

"There was an obvious imbalance of ability during the group stages," said Urawa coach Naoki Kusunose, "but I believe up-and-coming teams, like Odisha, will take confidence from this outing and be much better for it."

The Philippines (Kaya-Iloilo) and Thailand (College of Asian Scholars) were the other nations represented.

The inaugural CONCACAF W Champions Cup also completed its group stage in October – and won't resume until the semi-finals in May. Those will both be held in Mexico after Tigres UNAL and Club America topped the two five-team groups. They will meet NWSL clubs Portland Thorns and NJ/NY Gotham respectively, who were the group runners-up.

Portland edged San Diego Wave on goal difference in Group B, despite losing the match between the pair 3-2, Maria Sanchez scoring a hat-trick, while Monterrey missed out on qualifying from Group A by a point.

Unsurprisingly, the four non-Mexican/US clubs struggled, beating only each other. In Group A, Costa Rica's Alajuelense put five past Jamaican club Frazsiers Whip, while in Group B, Vancouver Whitecaps defeated Santa Fe of Panama.

Given the disparity of resources there were inevitably a lot of one-sided matches, with nine of the 20 won by four goals or more, notably Gotham's 13-0 thrashing of Frazsiers Whip in Kingston. But Santa Fe only lost 2-1 away to Portland and 2-0 at home to Wave.

In Europe, the Champions League is midway through the group stage but there have already been surprises with holders Barcelona beaten 2-0 at Manchester City and Wolfsburg losing 1-0 at Roma. Barca reacted by hammering Hammarby 9-0 in the next round, while City needed a late Mary Fowler goal to hold off Austria's St Polten 3-2.

In early heavyweight clashes, German champions Bayern Munich came from behind to beat Arsenal 5-2 with a hat-trick from Pernille Harder, following up by winning 2-0 at Juventus, Chelsea edged Real Madrid 3-2 and Lyon won 2-0 at Wolfsburg.

Here, too, crowds were disappointing. Only three of the 16 clubs attracted more than 5,000 to their opening home match: Arsenal, Manchester City and, surprisingly topping them all, Hammarby with 7,562 watching their 2-0 win over St Polten in Stockholm.

Round-up

Arsenal exit... Jonas Eidevall

EIDEVALL LEAVES ARSENAL

Jonas Eidevall quit Arsenal amid supporter unrest after the Gunners' 5-2 Champions League loss in Munich was followed by a 2-1 home defeat by Chelsea, leaving them with just five points from their opening four WSL games. "Jonas out" graffiti appeared near Arsenal's Emirates Stadium ahead of the London derby.

The Swede had been at the North London club since June 2021, guiding the Gunners to consecutive League Cup successes in 2023 and 2024.

ANGEL CITY PUNISHED, PRIDE CAN BE PROUD

The National Women's Soccer League sanctioned Angel City for executing side agreements with players that violated the salary cap, fining the club $200,000, docking them three points, and suspending club co-founder and CEO Julie Uhrman and general manager Angela Hucles Mangano until the end of 2024.

On the field, Orlando Pride won the regular season title with a record-breaking 23-match unbeaten start to the season. Ex-Middlesbrough defender Seb Hines has instilled a mean defence, conceding 15 goals in that run, while Marta and Barbra Banda provided the cutting edge.

The regular season's top scorer however, on 20 goals, was Malawi's Temwa Chawinga, whose Kansas City Current side also qualified for the eight-team post-season play-offs.

Under-20 champions... North Korea

ITALY JOIN EURO 2029 BID

Italy became the fifth bidder to declare an interest in hosting the 2029 European Championship following Germany, Poland, Portugal and a joint Denmark-Sweden proposal. Final bids are due in August 2025 with the decision four months later. Italy last hosted the event in 1993.

RACE ON TO HOST 2027 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL

The FAW says it intends to submit a bid for Cardiff's Principality Stadium to host the 2027 UEFA Champions League final. Spain, Switzerland and Poland have also expressed an interest in staging the event, with proposals needing to be delivered to UEFA by March 2025.

DOUBLE TRIUMPH FOR NORTH KOREAN YOUNGSTERS

North Korea won the Under-20 World Cup, beating Japan 1-0 in the final in Colombia, repeating the outcome of the Under-20 Asian Cup final between the two teams.

MORE AL FAYED ALLEGATIONS

In an interview with *The Athletic*, former Fulham Ladies captain Ronnie Gibbons said she was groped and kissed by the late Mohamed Al Fayed, the club's former owner and ex-Harrods boss. Four former players are being represented by the Justice for Harrods Survivors group. Al Fayed had made Fulham Europe's first professional women's team from 2000 to 2003.

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MLS...Messi and Suarez fire Inter Miami to the Supporters' Shield

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ASEAN Championship...Southeast Asia finals preview

Qatar

SAMINDRA KUNTI

Al Ahly advance to Qatar

The African champions will join Pachuca of Mexico and the Copa Libertadores winners in Doha to compete for the chance to face Real Madrid in the 2024 FIFA Intercontinental Cup final

Yet again, all roads lead to Qatar. On December 18, exactly two years after the 2022 World Cup final, Qatar's Lusail Stadium will stage the final of the Intercontinental Cup with Real Madrid taking on one of the world's other continental champions.

Late last year, amid a rollout of plans for the revamped 32-team Club World Cup, FIFA also released details for what it called the "Coupe Intercontinentale de la FIFA" – a modern reincarnation of the old Intercontinental Cup that pitted the top club of Europe against the best of South America until it was replaced by the Club World Cup in 2005.

In essence, the match crowned the best club in the world. In the 1960s, Pele's Santos prevailed against Eusebio's Benfica and then Milan; in the 1980s, Zico's Flamengo breezed past Liverpool. But the competition's prestige declined due to violence by Argentinian clubs and European teams' occasional refusals to participate.

Today, in an already congested calendar, FIFA's Club World Cup serves as the nominal pinnacle of club competition, raising questions about the need for a "new" annual Intercontinental Cup.

In the competition's opening match in September, the Asian champions, Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates, defeated Auckland City 6-2. For 77 minutes, the amateur club and champions of Oceania held their own, clawing their way back from 2-0 down to 3-2, but they succumbed to a late flourish from the hosts. Al Ain coach Hernan Crespo turned to his bench to call upon Soufiane Rahimi, whose brace broke Kiwi resistance.

But in the next round, it was Al Ain's turn to be eliminated, as Al Ahly of Egypt swept them aside with a 3-0 victory. Wessam Abou Ali, Emam Ashour and Mohamed Magdy Afsha – part of the same team that clinched the Egyptian Super Cup against arch-rivals Zamalek just five days earlier – provided the goals for the African champions at a packed Cairo International Stadium.

Dumped out ...Al Ain coach Hernan Crespo

Al Ahly feature in a huge number of matches – last season they played more than 60 times – and the current season looks set to be just as daunting with the defence of their CAF Champions League crown commencing in late November and their participation in the Club World Cup next summer.

The Egyptians' comprehensive win against Al Ain concluded the autumn fixtures of the Intercontinental Cup. In December, the tournament switches to Stadium 974 in Doha and resumes with the "Derby of the Americas" between Pachuca of Mexico, 2024 CONCACAF Champions Cup winners, and the Copa Libertadores champions – either Botafogo or Atletico Mineiro of Brazil. Three days later, on December 14, the winners will play Al Ahly and claim the right to take on UEFA Champions League winners Real Madrid in the final of the competition.

> The Intercontinental Cup also suffers from a sense of predictability – it's hard to look past Real Madrid as probable winners

The fixture lists of the Brazilian clubs again illustrate how the calendar is placing too great a demand on players – not to mention the extra travelling involved in such a competition. FIFA argues that the Intercontinental Cup adds just a few more games to the calendar and will strengthen the club game around the world. But in 2024,

Update

Heading to Qatar ...Al Ahly players celebrate during their victory over Al Ain

both Botafogo and Atletico Mineiro are on course to play at least 70 matches. That's not uncommon for the top clubs across South America, but, in Europe, fixture congestion is provoking more and more unrest. The expansion of the Club World Cup prompted legal action against FIFA from players' unions and national leagues.

The Intercontinental Cup also suffers from a sense of predictability – it's hard to look past Real Madrid as probable winners. Last year's final of the Club World Cup between Manchester City and Fluminense was a one-sided affair. In budget and star power, the European champions vastly outshine all other clubs in the competition.

In June, Madrid were crowned continental champions yet again, dispatching Borussia Dortmund in the final of the Champions League 2-0. In the summer, Kylian Mbappe arrived from Paris Saint-Germain as reinforcement. The France talisman is yet to settle down in a forward line that includes the Brazilian pair of Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo as well as Jude Bellingham – but that is a headache that their opponents, whoever they are, will find impossible to relate to.

Waiting in the final...Real Madrid will take on the champions of Africa, South America or CONCACAF

Southeast Asia

JOHN DUERDEN

ASEAN Championship set to begin

The competition for Southeast Asian nations kicks off in early December

The 2024 ASEAN Championship promises to be one of the most intriguing since Southeast Asia started holding a biennial competition back in 1996. Indonesia have never won it, beaten in six finals, but are somehow the team to beat in this ten-nation meet-up as they are the only country from the region of 650 million to still be alive in qualification for the 2026 World Cup.

The first of the two five-team groups (the top two go through to the semi-finals and each team plays two group games at home) contains three teams who have won 12 of the 14 titles so far: Thailand won their seventh in 2022, Singapore have won four of the others, although none since 2012, and Malaysia won their first and only title in 2010.

Thailand will be expected to finish on top, a feeling reinforced by the fact that in the meetings with Singapore in the second round of qualification for the 2026 World Cup, the boys from Bangkok won 3-1 home and away. Yet there is some payback wanted. In the second of those two games, had the Thais scored just one more then they would have progressed to the third

Holders...Thailand won the last ASEAN Championship in 2022

The team to beat ...Indonesia have been flying in 2024

round instead of China, but Singapore goalkeeper Hassan Sunny played out of his skin. As a reward, Chinese fans gave his food stall five-star reviews on their way to the final 18.

What Singapore really want, however, is a place in the last four and it is likely they will be fighting for second with their fierce rivals Malaysia. The Lions are not the team of 12 years ago while Malaysia, who just missed out on making the third round of World Cup qualification behind Oman and Kyrgyzstan, look to be in better shape, though losing South Korean coach Kim Pan-gon in July was a blow.

> Indonesia have never won it, beaten in six finals, but are somehow the team to beat

Cambodia have never made it out of the group stage though weren't that far away in 2022. Expectations are low in Phnom Penh after being eliminated from 2027 Asian Cup qualification in September by Sri Lanka, at the time Asia's lowest-ranked team at 205.

Timor-Leste complete the group, thanks to a play-off win over Brunei. After never winning a game in three previous appearances, their target is simple and will be helped by having two games, against Thailand and Singapore, in their home city of Dili for the first time ever.

Group B is mostly about Vietnam and Indonesia. Vietnam were the only team from the region to make the last round of qualification for the 2022 World Cup and expected to do the same for 2026, but back-to-back defeats against Indonesia in the space of five days in March, 1-0 in Jakarta and 3-0 in Hanoi, put paid to that. In January, Indonesia beat them again at the Asian Cup. To say the Reds want revenge on the *Merah Putih* is an understatement.

Myanmar have had some serious thrashings in the past 12 months: 2023 ended with a 5-0 loss in Japan and then a 6-1 home defeat at the hands of North Korea, and there were three more big defeats in the first half of 2024. The promise of almost a decade ago when the nation qualified for the Under-20 World Cup and then the senior side reached the last four of the 2016 ASEAN Championship seems far away. Meanwhile, Laos will be happy with avoiding fifth and last place.

The Philippines will be looking to sneak into the top two. The Azkals' form has not been great – the victory over Tajikistan in October ended a run of ten games without a win, with eight of those ending in defeat. Spanish coach Albert Capellas has an interesting CV, mostly as an assistant at Borussia Dortmund, Brondby, Vitesse, Maccabi Tel Aviv and also in China and faces a tricky challenge this time.

There is hope. Indonesia may have earned impressive draws with Saudi Arabia and Australia in September's World Cup qualifiers, but they are likely to be weakened. The majority of their team is now made up of European-born players with Indonesian heritage, so it remains to be seen how many, if any, will be released by clubs that are under no obligation to do so. It may be a great opportunity for locally-born players to remind coach Shin Tae-yong of what they can do and for Vietnam to back up media and fan comments that Indonesia's recent rise is all down to going Dutch.

Another interesting subplot is the battle between coaches from Japan and South Korea. Thailand and Singapore are in the Japanese camp with Masatada Ishii and Tsutomu Ogura, while Vietnam and Indonesia have Kim Sang-sik and Shin Tae-yong. One of those is likely to be celebrating after the two-legged final takes place in the first week of January.

THE DRAW

GROUP A

- Cambodia
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste

GROUP B

- Indonesia
- Laos
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Vietnam

Point to prove...Vietnam have lost three times to Group B rivals Indonesia in 2024

United States

JAMES NALTON

Review

MLS Supporters' Shield winners ...Inter Miami

Messi fires Inter Miami to MLS silverware

Florida side win regular season Supporters' Shield with record-breaking points haul, and go into the play-offs as favourites

As Inter Miami lifted the Supporters' Shield, breaking Major League Soccer's regular season points record in the process, it is easy to forget that such immediate success wasn't widely predicted for Lionel Messi's team in his first full season in the league.

At the start of each season, the official MLS website compiles previews and predictions for each side. Only three of the 17 experts involved predicted Inter Miami to top the Eastern Conference, and only five had them in the top three.

After all, Inter Miami finished 27th out of 29 teams in 2023, but with Messi on board, along with Luis Suarez, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba, this was almost a different franchise to the one that came before it, never mind a different team.

The hype that greeted Messi during his 2023 cameo turned into something more tangible on the pitch in 2024, namely a record-breaking regular season in which Inter Miami racked up 74 points in the overall standings, beating the previous record of 73 set by New England Revolution in 2021. Regardless of the quality of the players in the team, going from 27th to first is still a remarkable turnaround for the David Beckham-owned franchise, as demonstrated by those pre-season predictions.

Having secured the Supporters' Shield title with two games to go, Inter Miami went into the final regular season game needing a win to break the points record – ironically against the previous record holders. With the scores level at 2-2 in the second half, Messi came off the bench and within a minute helped set up the goal that put Inter ahead before scoring an 11-minute hat-trick to see Inter Miami win 6-2 and break the record.

It was a neat summary of his huge impact on the team in 2024: despite not playing the whole game he still ended as its best player.

Messi only made 19 appearances in the 34-game MLS season, missing 15 games due to a combination of injury and international call-ups. In a run of nine games in Messi's absence at the Copa America, and a subsequent

injury, Inter Miami won eight.

That they were able to carry on winning without Messi was down to the coaching of Tata Martino and the mentality of the squad, but that such a mentality exists in the first place was a result of Messi's presence and the high expectations that he brings.

Inter Miami's regular season triumph also saw them handed the host nation's final spot at the 2025 Club World Cup.

While Miami increasingly becomes the focus of MLS and US soccer in the East, teams in another high-profile US city, Los Angeles, battled it out at the top of the Western Conference.

LA Galaxy were the standout side for much of the season. The performances of Riqui Puig, Joseph Paintsil, Dejan Joveljic and Gabriel Pec made them the best attacking force in the West, but having sat atop the conference table since July, they were pipped by local rivals LAFC on the final day of the regular season.

Galaxy lost 2-1 to Houston Dynamo on "Decision Day" after conceding a goal scored by their former player Daniel Steres in the 11th minute of added time. It meant LAFC's 3-1 win against San Jose Earthquakes was enough to see them top the Western Conference by a single goal.

Nine teams from each conference qualified for the post-season, so making the play-offs isn't necessarily the mark of a good team, but there were some impressive performances outside Miami and Los Angeles.

In the West, Real Salt Lake weathered the departure of 22-year-old forward Andres Gomez who left for Rennes mid-season. Cristian Arango's 17 goals, and the performances of one of the best young players in MLS, 21-year-old Diego Luna, helped RSL put together a good campaign and finish third in their conference.

Seattle Sounders – the other US representative at the 2025 Club World Cup, having qualified by winning the CONCACAF Champions League in 2022 – enjoyed a promising end to the regular season moving up to fourth in the West after a difficult start.

Eric Ramsay, formerly part of Manchester United's coaching staff, guided Minnesota United into the play-offs in his first season, while in another link to Old Trafford, Phil Neville's Portland Timbers scraped into a wildcard play-off spot. The Timbers were one of the best teams to watch thanks to an exciting attack led by Brazilian forward Evander and a leaky defence that guaranteed goal-filled games.

Inter Miami racked up 74 points in the overall standings, beating the previous record of 73 set by New England Revolution in 2021

Former Aston Villa, Norwich City and Brentford boss Dean Smith led Charlotte FC to a respectable fifth-place finish in the Eastern Conference while 2023 Supporters' Shield winners FC Cincinnati finished third.

Another former Villa man, Christian Benteke, claimed the league's Golden Boot award with 23 goals for D.C. United, but that was not enough for the team to qualify for the play-offs in a disappointing season.

Aside from Inter Miami, the best team in MLS are Columbus Crew, who finished second overall. When it comes to their style of play and tactical application, they are one of the best teams MLS has seen. Their former Watford forward Cucho Hernandez challenged Messi to be named MLS MVP in 2024, but though he's the star player, the real attraction of the Crew is their enterprising style of play under head coach Wilfried Nancy.

It likely won't be long before clubs elsewhere in the world come enquiring about Cucho and the coach, so this Columbus team needs to be savoured in American soccer as much as Messi.

SEASON'S BEST

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Lionel MESSI (Inter Miami)
Despite missing a good chunk of the season, Messi's output was up there with those who played a full campaign. His 1.21 goals scored per 90 minutes played is the highest in MLS history.

COACH OF THE YEAR
Wilfried NANCY (Columbus Crew)
The Frenchman continues to set the standard in MLS. Columbus built on last season's MLS Cup win with a Leagues Cup title, and it has been good for the league to have a different kind of attraction beyond Miami and Messi.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Gabriel PEC (LA Galaxy)
MLS recruitment often focuses either on stars that can make an immediate impact or youngsters to develop. In the 23-year-old Brazilian winger, who finished the season with 15 goals and 12 assists, Galaxy found a player who offers both.

Columbus Crew star ...Cucho Hernandez

Best of the West...LA Galaxy and LAFC topped the MLS Western Conference

China

JOHN DUERDEN

Shanghai now the centre of Chinese football

Shanghai Port pip rivals Shanghai Shenhua to the Chinese Super League title amidst a clear shift in the dynamics of football in the Middle Kingdom

Shanghai Port needed a victory on the final day of the 2024 Chinese Super League season to lift a third title and they did that in style, thrashing Tianjin Jinmen Tigers 5-0. The celebrations could be heard all around China's biggest city.

For the first time ever in the country, this season was all about this commercial and financial megapolis, as Port and Shanghai Shenhua fought it out at the top of the table all the way to the end. As the Reds lifted the trophy, the Blues were only a point behind. The others were nowhere.

It is common knowledge that the spending in China's top tier stopped some time ago and most clubs have been more focused on staying in business than scouring Europe's top leagues for big-name talent. Port, however, have the one big superstar remaining – Oscar. The Brazilian has completed his eighth, and likely last, season in the Middle Kingdom and can look back with satisfaction at three titles. He managed 14 goals and 20 assists in total, helping

CSL's top two... Shanghai Shenhua and rivals Shanghai Port clash in the Shanghai derby

Chinese champions... Shanghai Port line-up for a team photo

Wu Lei, still the biggest local star, score 34 goals, more than each of the bottom six teams managed during the whole season. All in all, Port set a new record with 96 goals scored in 30 games.

Much of that is also down to Kevin Muscat who took over in December. Now he has followed his 2022 Japanese title with Yokohama F. Marinos with the 2024 Chinese crown. As a successor at Yokohama to Ange Postecoglou, and a former assistant of the current Tottenham Hotspur boss, it is not a surprise that Muscat's teams attack whenever possible. Now for the former Wolverhampton Wanderers, Crystal Palace and Millwall defender, who also led Melbourne Victory to two championships in Australia, the challenge lies in Asia.

Fans of Shanghai Shenhua will look back on this season with very mixed feelings. After the title win in 1995, the Blues finished second no less than eight times in the following 13 years. There was another first place in 2003 but that triumph was chalked off a decade later due to match-fixing and there has been no challenge since – until now.

While Port have an Aussie in charge, Shenhua's coach is a Russian. Leonid Slutsky's CV contains spells in charge of the Russia national team, Hull City and CSKA Moscow and would have been greatly enhanced by the Chinese league title. They had the tightest of defences but still managed to score plenty. Attacking duo Andre Luis of Brazil and Switzerland's Cephas Malele scored a hatful and showed that you don't need to be a big name to star in the east.

The Blues were second for much of the season, staying on the shoulders of their rivals. Then, on an unforgettable August evening, won the Shanghai derby to go top. A goal down until the 79th minute, it ended in a 3-1 win as the home fans went wild and started to believe. Then came four wins by a single goal to leave them just two games away from glory before a 2-2 draw in the penultimate match against relegation-battling Shenzhen Peng City blew their hopes wide apart. After it all finished, Port striker Wu Lei had some kind words, pointing to the club's young prospects and saying that they would win the title at some point.

Understandably, the standard in the league is not what it was given the financial issues. Just before the season started Dalian Pro folded, followed quickly by Shenzhen FC. In response Sichuan Jiuniu – of the City Football Group – moved to the southern city and were renamed Shenzhen Peng and only just escaped relegation. Those clubs were not exactly powerhouses but bigger names have also vanished. Jiangsu FC, champions in 2020, no longer exist. Guangzhou Evergrande – now simply known as Guangzhou FC – with eight league titles from 2011 to 2019, were relegated in 2022.

> As the Reds lifted the trophy, the Blues were only a point behind. The others were nowhere

There is some room for optimism.

Remaining superstar... Shanghai Port captain Oscar

SEASON'S BEST

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
Wu LEI (Shanghai Port)
The 32-year-old China national team captain had by far the best season of his career. His 34 goals beat the previous CSL record by five, while he was also a leader for the league champions.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
Wang YUDONG (Zhejiang)
The 17-year-old forward can play through the middle or on either wing and impressed in 11 league appearances – as well as in the Asian Champions League, a distraction that likely contributed to his club's mid-table finish.

COACH OF THE SEASON
Leonid SLUTSKY
(Shanghai Shenhua)
In his first coaching post in Asia, the experienced 53-year-old Russian took a team from fifth last season to within a point of the title – and there is still potential for improvement.

Chengdu Rongcheng are just six years old and followed last season's fourth-place finish with third this time around and an average attendance of 40,000. Only Beijing Guoan attracted more fans, 47,000. The Greens took fourth place with Shandong Taishan, another traditional giant who won titles before the money arrived, in fifth. Those big crowds – the league wide average was close to 20,000 – is encouraging.

Even better is that Dalian Yingbo won promotion to the top tier in front of over 60,000 spectators, a Chinese League One record. They finished in second, below Yunnan Yukun – who join them in the CSL next season – and above Guangzhou, who are still waiting to return to the top flight. Their glory days are now far away, now Shanghai is the centre of Chinese football.

Title-winning coach...Kevin Muscat

Taiwan

STEVE MENARY

'If you haven't got foreign players, you can't compete'

Taiwan's head coach Gary White is building a new team using the country's diaspora

Taiwan coach ...Gary White

Taiwan's international dragnet is expanding to include players in the US as coach Gary White looks to increase the playing pool at the Asian side.

The island, known as Chinese Taipei in a sporting context, struggled in the second round of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup, losing all six games to Oman, Kyrgyzstan and Malaysia.

After a friendly with Singapore in November, White's attention turns to the qualifiers for next year's East Asian Federation Football Championship. In December, Chinese Taipei will battle with the likes of Hong Kong, Mongolia and North Korea in the qualifiers.

White says: "The top teams in Asia that go to the World Cup produce players that go to the top leagues in the world. Taiwan are at a much lower level and if you haven't got foreign players, you can't compete because the standard of the local league isn't at the level that you want it to be.

"We've a bunch of players in MLS and in the colleges that we need to recruit so that we have a decent pool of players."

Players identified include Jason Hsu, a defender at the University of California, and goalkeeper Derrek Chan from California, who left MLS Next Pro side Real Monarchs for lower league German club Mulheimer FC 97.

White is regularly offered eligible players but is not willing to simply take anyone.

"I get players regularly being thrown at me with Taiwanese heritage, but I need to meet them face to face to see if they are doing it for the right reasons," explains White, who is also trying to get local players with overseas clubs to raise their levels. "If they haven't got the right values, they won't fit."

> "If they haven't got the right values, they won't fit"
> Taiwan head coach Gary White

China is the best route for Taiwanese players and Chen Po-liang, the island's veteran captain, has carved out a long and successful career with Chinese Super League club Qingdao West Coast.

Despite long-standing political tensions with Taiwan, CSL clubs benefit from local rules that allow them to sign one player from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan on top of their quota of overseas players.

Veteran captain... Chen Po-liang in action in World Cup qualifying against Malaysia

There are nine Taiwanese players in China including defender Wang Chien-ming at Qingdao Hainiu and most of White's striking options, notably main centre-forward Chen Hao-wei at second tier side Qingdao Red Lions.

Super League clubs are obliged to let players go on international duty due to FIFA rules, but securing the release of players from League One clubs in China is not always a guarantee says White.

Hao-wei and the promising young striker, Yu Yao-hsing, who plies his trade with Foshan Nanshi in the Chinese second tier, will be vital in helping Chinese Taipei in the battle for a place in the EAFF finals in South Korea next summer.

With White's contract up next summer, the finals could be a last hurrah and, maybe, a chance to finally return home.

After starting his international career with the British Virgin Islands in 1998, White has since managed the Bahamas, Guam and Hong Kong as well as clubs in China, Japan and Malaysia, before returning for his second spell in Taiwan. Now, he is open to offers.

"I've been all over the world and got experience in international qualifiers and taken charge of hundreds of games and developed my own style of play," says White, who was one of only 16 coaches invited by the English Football Association onto the only Elite coaching course in 2014. "In England, you don't get that time to develop and implement what you've learnt in courses."

Tales from the 211

Exploring the weird and wonderful world of football across FIFA's 211 member nations

Near-perfect ...Angelholms didn't concede a goal all season *Photo credit: Angelholms FF Dam*

INVINCIBLES MISS OUT ON TITLE

In the history of European football, a handful of clubs have gone the entire season unbeaten and still missed out on the title. Perugia did it in Serie A in 1978-79, drawing 19 of their 30 matches and finishing second behind Milan; Benfica (1977-78) and Galatasaray (1985-86) both missed out on goal difference to Porto and Besiktas respectively in Portugal and Turkey, while Bulgaria's Spartak Sofia (1951) and Serbia's Red Star Belgrade (2007-08) also suffered similar pain.

But you have to feel for Angelholms, who play in the fourth division of Swedish women's football. Not only did they remain unbeaten all season, they didn't concede a single goal – and yet still contrived to finish second. The team won 15 and drew three of their 18 games, finishing with a 78-0 goal difference and 48 points. But rivals Ljungbyheds won 16, drew one and lost one to take the title by a single point.

Remarkably, having scored a penalty herself during the campaign, Angelholms' 17-year-old keeper Nellie Bengtsson finished the season with more goals scored than she conceded.

MASS COLLAPSE ON THE PITCH

It has been anything but a good start to their inaugural season for Montenegrin third-tier club Njegos. After losing their first three games of the season by a combined scoreline of 31-2 (10-0, 6-2 and 15-0 defeats), they met former national champions Zeta in the fourth match of the campaign. They only turned up to the game with ten players and were 19-0 down by the 70th minute, but what transpired next was even more bizarre... multiple Njegos players collapsed on the pitch and the match had to be abandoned.

Several explanations have been given for the mysterious incident. Politician Milan Knezevic was reported to have suggested – perhaps tongue in cheek – that the players had been poisoned with plutonium at half-time and had to be transferred by helicopter to hospital for resuscitation. Cynics, however, would say a more likely explanation is that abandoning the game would hand Njegos a default 3-0 defeat rather than the thrashing they were heading for.

THE KING OF ALL COMEBACKS

Football supporters might not necessarily have the Flens Cup – a regional cup competition contested by the champions of the various divisions in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein – on their radar, but it has undoubtedly produced one of the game's greatest-ever comebacks. SG Oldenburg/Gohl II found themselves 7-0 down against SV Wasbek with 57 minutes on the clock, only to hit back with seven goals – with the dramatic equaliser arriving seven minutes into stoppage-time – before winning the tie in a penalty shootout.

SEVERED PIG'S HEAD INTERRUPTS DERBY

Corinthians v Palmeiras is one of the biggest derbies in Brazil, but the latest clash between the Sao Paulo sides saw unprecedented scenes with a pig's head being thrown onto the pitch.

It will remind many of the 2002 *El Clasico* at the Nou Camp when Barcelona supporters protested against Luis Figo joining rivals Real Madrid. The reason behind the incident on this occasion, however – although still inexcusable – is that the pig is a symbol of Palmeiras, who adopted the animal as their mascot in 1986.

HONDA COMES OUT OF RETIREMENT (AGAIN)

Eyebrows were raised when Bhutanese champions Paro announced that 38-year-old Japan legend Keisuke Honda was coming out of retirement to join them on a one-match deal for their AFC Challenge League qualifier against Church Boys United of Nepal in August.

On a muddy pitch in Kathmandu, Honda returned to action for the first time in almost three years as Paro won 2-1 to book their place in Asia's tertiary club competition and qualify for a continental tournament proper for the first time in their history.

But that was not to be the end of Honda's story with Paro. With the Bhutan Premier League title already wrapped up, the club brought him back for their final game of the season in late October against Thimphu City, who still harboured hopes of finishing second. But Honda was having none of it, scoring two equalisers – a penalty and a glancing header – as Paro rescued a 2-2 draw at the death. Honda could have even completed his hat-trick and the comeback in the 96th minute, only for the Thimphu City keeper to block his effort from point-blank range.

Lee Wingate

Keisuke comeback...Honda won 98 caps for Japan

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BUNDESLIGA 2024-25

AUGSBURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Finn **DAHMEN**	(26) 27.03.98
22	Nedeljko **LABROVIC** (Cro)	(25) 10.10.99
25	Daniel **KLEIN**	(23) 13.03.01

DEFENDERS

2	Robert **GUMNY** (Pol)	(26) 04.06.98
3	Mads **PEDERSEN** (Den)	(28) 01.09.96
4	Reece **OXFORD** (Eng)	(25) 16.12.98
5	Chrislain **MATSIMA** (Fra)	(22) 15.05.02
6	Jeffrey **GOUWELEEUW** (Ned)	(33) 10.06.91
11	Marius **WOLF**	(29) 27.05.95
13	Dimitris **GIANNOULIS** (Gre)	(29) 17.10.95
23	Maximilian **BAUER**	(24) 09.02.00
31	Keven **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(27) 28.04.97
40	Noahkai **BANKS** (USA)	(17) 01.12.06

MIDFIELDERS

8	Elvis **REXHBECAJ** (Kos)	(27) 01.11.97
10	Arne **MAIER**	(25) 08.01.99
14	Masaya **OKUGAWA** (Jpn)	(28) 14.04.96
17	Kristijan **JAKIC** (Cro)	(27) 14.05.97
18	Tim **BREITHAUPT**	(22) 07.02.02
19	Frank **ONYEKA** (Nga)	(26) 01.01.98
20	Alexis **CLAUDE-MAURICE** (Fra)	(26) 06.06.98
24	Fredrik **JENSEN** (Fin)	(27) 09.09.97
36	Mert **KOMUR**	(19) 17.07.05
42	Mahmut **KUCUKSAHIN** (Tur)	(20) 07.04.04
44	Henri **KOUDOSSOU**	(25) 03.09.99

FORWARDS

7	Yusuf **KABADAYI**	(20) 02.02.04
9	Samuel **ESSENDE** (Cod)	(26) 23.01.98
15	Steve **MOUNIE** (Ben)	(30) 29.09.94
16	Ruben **VARGAS** (Sui)	(26) 05.08.98
21	Phillip **TIETZ**	(27) 09.07.97

COACH

Jess **THORUP** (Den)		(54) 21.02.70

B. LEVERKUSEN

GOALKEEPERS

1	Lukas **HRADECKY** (Fin)	(34) 24.11.89
17	Matej **KOVAR** (Cze)	(24) 17.05.00
36	Niklas **LOMB**	(31) 28.06.93

DEFENDERS

3	Piero **HINCAPIE** (Ecu)	(22) 09.01.02
4	Jonathan **TAH**	(28) 11.02.96
12	Edmond **TAPSOBA** (Bfa)	(25) 02.02.99
13	**ARTHUR** (Bra)	(21) 17.03.03
20	Alex **GRIMALDO** (Spa)	(29) 20.09.95
23	Nordi **MUKIELE** (Fra)	(27) 01.11.97
30	Jeremie **FRIMPONG** (Ned)	(23) 10.12.00
39	Sadik **FOFANA** (Tog)	(21) 16.05.03
44	Jeanuel **BELOCIAN** (Fra)	(19) 17.02.05

MIDFIELDERS

7	Jonas **HOFMANN**	(32) 14.07.92
8	Robert **ANDRICH**	(30) 22.09.94
10	Florian **WIRTZ**	(21) 03.05.03
24	Aleix **GARCIA** (Spa)	(27) 28.06.97
25	Exequiel **PALACIOS** (Arg)	(26) 05.10.98
34	Granit **XHAKA** (Sui)	(32) 27.09.92

FORWARDS

11	Martin **TERRIER** (Fra)	(27) 04.03.97
14	Patrik **SCHICK** (Cze)	(28) 24.01.96
19	Nathan **TELLA** (Nga)	(25) 05.07.99
21	Amine **ADLI** (Mar)	(24) 10.05.00
22	Victor **BONIFACE** (Nga)	(23) 23.12.00

COACH

Xabi **ALONSO** (Spa)		(42) 25.11.81

BAYERN MUNICH

GOALKEEPERS

1	Manuel **NEUER**	(38) 27.03.86
18	Daniel **PERETZ** (Isr)	(24) 10.07.00
26	Sven **ULREICH**	(36) 03.08.88

DEFENDERS

2	Dayot **UPAMECANO** (Fra)	(26) 27.10.98
3	**KIM** Min-jae (Kor)	(28) 15.11.96
15	Eric **DIER** (Eng)	(30) 15.01.94
19	Alphonso **DAVIES** (Can)	(24) 02.11.00
21	Hiroki **ITO** (Jpn)	(25) 12.05.99
22	Raphael **GUERREIRO** (Por)	(30) 22.12.93
23	Sacha **BOEY** (Fra)	(24) 13.09.00
28	Tarek **BUCHMANN**	(19) 28.02.05
44	Josip **STANISIC** (Cro)	(24) 02.04.00
49	Adam **AZNOU** (Alb)	(18) 02.06.06

MIDFIELDERS

6	Joshua **KIMMICH**	(29) 08.02.95
8	Leon **GORETZKA**	(29) 06.02.95
16	Joao **PALHINHA** (Por)	(29) 09.07.95
20	Arijon **IBRAHIMOVIC**	(18) 11.12.05
27	Konrad **LAIMER** (Aut)	(27) 27.05.97
42	Jamal **MUSIALA**	(21) 26.02.03
45	Aleksandar **PAVLOVIC**	(20) 03.05.04

FORWARDS

7	Serge **GNABRY**	(29) 12.07.95
9	Harry **KANE** (Eng)	(31) 28.07.93
10	Leroy **SANE**	(28) 11.01.96
11	Kingsley **COMAN** (Fra)	(28) 13.06.96
17	Michael **OLISE** (Fra)	(22) 12.12.01
25	Thomas **MULLER**	(35) 13.09.89
31	Nestory **IRANKUNDA** (Aus)	(18) 09.02.06
39	Mathys **TEL** (Fra)	(19) 27.04.05

COACH

Vincent **KOMPANY** (Bel)		(38) 10.04.86

New boy...Michael Olise has started impressively at the Allianz Arena

BOCHUM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Timo **HORN**	(31) 12.05.93
27	Patrick **DREWES**	(31) 04.02.93
34	Paul **GRAVE**	(23) 10.04.01

DEFENDERS

2	Cristian **GAMBOA** (Crc)	(35) 24.10.89
4	Erhan **MASOVIC** (Srb)	(26) 22.11.98
5	**BERNARDO** (Bra)	(29) 14.05.95
13	Jakov **MEDIC** (Cro)	(26) 07.09.98
14	Tim **OERMANN**	(21) 06.10.03
15	Felix **PASSLACK**	(26) 29.05.98
20	Ivan **ORDETS** (Ukr)	(32) 08.07.92
25	Mohammed **TOLBA**	(20) 19.07.04
32	Maximilian **WITTEK**	(29) 21.08.95
41	Noah **LOOSLI** (Sui)	(27) 23.01.97

MIDFIELDERS

6	Ibrahima **SISSOKO** (Mli)	(27) 27.10.97
7	Lukas **DASCHNER**	(26) 01.10.98
8	Anthony **LOSILLA** (Fra)	(38) 10.03.86
10	Dani **DE WIT** (Ned)	(26) 28.01.98
11	Moritz-Broni **KWARTENG**	(26) 28.04.98
16	Niklas **JAHN**	(20) 26.07.04
17	Agon **ELEZI** (Mkd)	(23) 01.03.01
19	Matus **BERO** (Svk)	(29) 06.09.95
23	Koji **MIYOSHI** (Jpn)	(27) 26.03.97
24	Mats **PANNEWIG**	(20) 28.10.04
28	Lennart **KOERDT**	(19) 07.01.05

FORWARDS

9	Myron **BOADU** (Ned)	(23) 14.01.01
18	Samuel **BAMBA**	(20) 13.02.04
21	Gerrit **HOLTMANN** (Phi)	(29) 25.03.95
22	Aliou **BALDE** (Gui)	(21) 12.12.02
29	Mortiz **BROSCHINSKI**	(24) 23.09.00
33	Philipp **HOFMANN**	(31) 30.03.93

COACH

Dieter **HECKING**		(60) 12.09.64

B. DORTMUND

GOALKEEPERS

1	Gregor **KOBEL** (Sui)	(26) 06.12.97
33	Alexander **MEYER**	(33) 13.04.91
35	Marcel **LOTKA** (Pol)	(23) 25.05.01

DEFENDERS

2	Yan **COUTO** (Bra)	(22) 03.06.02
3	Waldemar **ANTON**	(28) 20.07.96
4	Nico **SCHLOTTERBECK**	(24) 01.12.99
5	Ramy **BENSEBAINI** (Alg)	(29) 16.04.95
25	Niklas **SULE**	(29) 03.09.95
26	Julian **RYERSON** (Nor)	(27) 17.11.97
42	Almugera **KABAR**	(18) 06.06.06

MIDFIELDERS

7	Giovanni **REYNA** (USA)	(22) 13.11.02
8	Felix **NMECHA**	(24) 10.10.00
10	Julian **BRANDT**	(28) 02.05.96
13	Pascal **GROSS**	(33) 15.06.91
20	Marcel **SABITZER** (Aut)	(30) 17.03.94
23	Emre **CAN**	(30) 12.01.94
38	Kjell **WATJEN**	(18) 16.02.06

FORWARDS

9	Serhou **GUIRASSY** (Gui)	(28) 12.03.96
14	Maximilian **BEIER**	(22) 17.10.02
16	Julien **DURANVILLE** (Bel)	(18) 05.05.06
21	Donyell **MALEN** (Ned)	(25) 19.01.99
27	Karim **ADEYEMI**	(22) 18.01.02
37	Cole **CAMPBELL** (USA)	(18) 20.02.06
43	Jamie **GITTENS** (Eng)	(20) 08.08.04

COACH

Nuri **SAHIN** (Tur)		(36) 05.09.88

B. M'GLADBACH

GOALKEEPERS

1	Jonas **OMLIN** (Sui)	(30) 10.01.94
21	Tobias **SIPPEL**	(36) 22.03.88
33	Moritz **NICOLAS**	(27) 21.10.97
41	Jan **OLSCHOWSKY**	(23) 18.11.01

DEFENDERS

2	Fabio **CHIARODIA** (Ita)	(19) 05.06.05
3	Ko **ITAKURA** (Jpn)	(27) 27.01.97
5	Marvin **FRIEDRICH**	(28) 13.12.95
20	Luca **NETZ**	(21) 15.05.03
22	Stefan **LAINER** (Aut)	(32) 27.08.92
26	Lukas **ULLRICH**	(20) 16.02.04
29	Joe **SCALLY** (USA)	(21) 31.12.02
30	Nico **ELVEDI** (Sui)	(28) 30.09.96

MIDFIELDERS

7	Kevin **STOGER** (Aut)	(31) 27.08.93
8	Julian **WEIGL**	(29) 08.09.95
10	Florian **NEUHAUS**	(27) 16.03.97
16	Philipp **SANDER**	(26) 21.02.98
27	Rocco **REITZ**	(22) 29.05.02
38	Yvandre **BORGES SANCHES** (Lux)	(20) 24.05.04

FORWARDS

9	Franck **HONORAT** (Fra)	(28) 11.08.96
11	Tim **KLEINDIENST**	(29) 31.08.95
13	Shio **FUKUDA** (Jpn)	(20) 08.04.04
14	Alassane **PLEA** (Fra)	(31) 10.03.93
19	Nathan **NGOUMOU** (Fra)	(24) 14.05.00
25	Robin **HACK**	(26) 27.08.98
28	Grant-Leon **RANOS** (Arm)	(21) 20.07.03
31	Tomas **CVANCARA** (Cze)	(24) 13.08.00
34	Charles **HERRMAN**	(18) 21.01.06

COACH

Gerardo **SEOANE** (Sui)		(46) 30.10.78

E. FRANKFURT

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kevin **TRAPP**	(34) 08.07.90
33	Jens **GRAHL**	(36) 22.09.88
40	Kaua **SANTOS** (Bra)	(21) 11.04.03

DEFENDERS

3	Arthur **THEATE** (Bel)	(24) 25.05.00
4	Robin **KOCH**	(28) 17.07.96
13	Rasmus **KRISTENSEN** (Den)	(27) 11.07.97
21	Nathaniel **BROWN**	(21) 16.05.03
22	Timothy **CHANDLER** (USA)	(34) 29.03.90
29	Niels **NKOUNKOU** (Fra)	(24) 01.11.00
34	Nnamdi **COLLINS**	(20) 10.01.04
35	**TUTA** (Bra)	(25) 04.07.99
41	Jerome **ONGUENE** (Cmr)	(26) 22.12.97

MIDFIELDERS

6	Oscar **HOJLUND** (Den)	(19) 04.01.05
8	Fares **CHAIBI** (Alg)	(21) 28.11.02
15	Ellyes **SKHIRI** (Tun)	(29) 10.05.95
16	Hugo **LARSSON** (Swe)	(20) 27.06.04
18	Mahmoud **DAHOUD**	(28) 01.01.96
20	Can **UZUN** (Tur)	(19) 11.11.05
23	Krisztian **LISZTES** (Hun)	(19) 06.05.05
26	Eric Junior **DINA EBIMBE** (Fra)	(24) 21.11.00
27	Mario **GOTZE**	(32) 03.06.92

FORWARDS

7	Omar **MARMOUSH** (Egy)	(25) 07.02.99
9	Igor **MATANOVIC** (Cro)	(21) 31.03.03
11	Hugo **EKITIKE** (Fra)	(22) 20.06.02
19	Jean-Matteo **BAHOYA** (Fra)	(19) 07.05.05
36	Ansgar **KNAUFF**	(22) 10.01.02

COACH

Dino **TOPPMOLLER**		(43) 23.11.80

FREIBURG

GOALKEEPERS

1	Noah **ATUBOLU**	(22) 25.05.02
21	Florian **MULLER**	(27) 13.11.97
24	Jannik **HUTH**	(30) 15.04.94

DEFENDERS

3	Philipp **LIENHART** (Aut)	(28) 11.07.96
4	Kenneth **SCHMIDT**	(22) 03.06.02
5	Manuel **GULDE**	(33) 12.02.91
17	Lukas **KUBLER**	(32) 30.08.92
25	Kilian **SILDILLIA** (Fra)	(22) 16.05.02
28	Mattias **GINTER**	(30) 19.01.94
30	Christian **GUNTER**	(31) 28.02.93
33	Jordy **MAKENGO** (Fra)	(23) 03.08.01
37	Max **ROSENFELDER**	(21) 10.02.03
43	Bruno **OGBUS** (Sui)	(18) 17.12.05

MIDFIELDERS

6	Patrick **OSTERHAGE**	(24) 01.02.00
8	Maximilian **EGGESTEIN**	(27) 08.12.96
11	Daniel-Kofi **KYEREH** (Gha)	(28) 08.03.96
23	Florent **MUSLIJA** (Kos)	(26) 06.07.98
27	Nicolas **HOFLER**	(34) 09.03.90
34	Merlin **ROHL**	(22) 05.07.02
44	Johan **MANZAMBI** (Sui)	(19) 14.10.05

FORWARDS

7	Noah **WEISSHAUPT**	(23) 20.09.01
9	Lucas **HOLER**	(30) 10.07.94
18	Eren **DINKCI** (Tur)	(22) 13.12.01
20	Junior **ADAMU** (Aut)	(23) 06.06.01
26	Maximilian **PHILIPP**	(30) 01.03.94
32	Vincenzo **GRIFO** (Ita)	(31) 07.04.93
38	Michael **GREGORITSCH** (Aut)	(30) 18.04.94
42	Ritsu **DOAN** (Jpn)	(26) 16.06.98

COACH

Julian **SCHUSTER**		(39) 15.04.85

HEIDENHEIM

GOALKEEPERS

1	Kevin **MULLER**	(33) 15.03.91
22	Vitus **EICHER**	(34) 05.11.90
34	Paul **TSCHERNUTH** (Aut)	(22) 20.01.02
40	Frank **FELLER**	(20) 07.01.04

DEFENDERS

2	Marnon **BUSCH**	(29) 08.12.94
4	Tim **SIERSLEBEN**	(24) 09.03.00
5	Benedikt **GIMBER**	(27) 19.02.97
6	Partrick **MAINKA**	(30) 06.11.94
19	Jonas **FOHRENBACH**	(28) 26.01.96
23	Omar **TRAORE**	(26) 04.02.98
27	Thomas **KELLER**	(25) 05.08.95

MIDFIELDERS

3	Jan **SCHOPPNER**	(25) 12.07.99
10	Paul **WANNER**	(18) 23.12.05
11	Denis **THOMALLA**	(32) 16.08.92
16	Julian **NIEHUES**	(23) 17.04.01
20	Luca **KERBER**	(22) 10.03.02
21	Adrian **BECK**	(27) 09.06.97
30	Norman **THEUERKAUF**	(37) 24.01.87
33	Lennard **MALONEY** (USA)	(25) 08.10.99
36	Luka **JANES**	(20) 19.01.04
39	Niklas **DORSCH**	(26) 12.01.98

FORWARDS

8	Leo **SCIENZA** (Bra)	(26) 13.09.98
9	Stefan **SCHIMMER**	(30) 28.04.94
14	Maximilian **BREUNIG**	(24) 14.08.00
17	Mathias **HONSAK** (Aut)	(27) 20.12.96
18	Marvin **PIERINGER**	(25) 04.10.99
25	Christopher **NEGELE**	(19) 11.04.05
29	Mikkel **KAUFMANN** (Den)	(23) 03.01.01
31	Sirlord **CONTEH**	(28) 09.07.96

COACH

Frank **SCHMIDT**		(50) 03.01.74

HOFFENHEIM

GOALKEEPERS
1 Oliver **BAUMANN** (34) 02.06.90
36 Lukas **PETERSSON** (Isl) (20) 09.02.04
37 Luca **PHILIPP** (23) 28.11.00

DEFENDERS
2 Robin **HRANAC** (Cze) (24) 29.01.00
3 Pavel **KADERABEK** (Cze) (32) 25.04.92
4 Tim **DREXLER** (19) 06.03.05
5 Ozan **KABAK** (Tur) (24) 25.03.00
13 Christopher **LENZ** (30) 22.09.94
15 Valentin **GENDREY** (Fra) (24) 21.06.00
19 David **JURASEK** (Cze) (24) 07.08.00
24 Marco **JOHN** (22) 02.04.02
25 Kevin **AKPOGUMA** (Nga) (29) 19.04.95
34 Stanley **NSOKI** (Fra) (25) 09.04.99
35 Arthur **CHAVES** (Bra) (23) 29.01.01
41 Attila **SZALAI** (Hun) (26) 20.01.98

MIDFIELDERS
6 Grischa **PROMEL** (29) 09.01.95
7 Tom **BISCHOF** (19) 28.06.05
8 Dennis **GEIGER** (26) 10.06.98
11 Florian **GRILLITSCH** (Aut) (29) 07.08.95
16 Anton **SATCH** (26) 15.11.98
17 Umut **TOHMUCU** (20) 11.08.04
18 Diadie **SAMASSEKOU** (Mli) (28) 11.01.96
20 Finn Ole **BECKER** (24) 08.06.00
22 Alexander **PRASS** (Aut) (23) 26.05.01
28 Florian **MICHELER** (Aut) (19) 17.05.05

FORWARDS
9 Ihlas **BEBOU** (Tog) (30) 23.04.94
10 Megim **BERISHA** (26) 11.05.98
21 Marius **BULTER** (31) 29.03.93
23 Adam **HLOZEK** (Cze) (22) 25.07.02
26 Haris **TABAKOVIC** (Bih) (30) 20.06.94
27 Andrej **KRAMARIC** (Cro) (33) 19.06.91
29 Jacob **BRUUN LARSEN** (Den) (26) 19.09.98
33 Max **MOERSTEDT** (18) 15.01.06

COACH
Pellegrino **MATARAZZO** (USA) (46) 28.11.77

HOLSTEIN KIEL

GOALKEEPERS
1 Timon **WEINER** (25) 18.01.99
21 Thomas **DAHNE** (30) 04.01.94
31 Marcel **ENGELHARDT** (31) 05.04.93
40 Tyler **DOGAN** (Tur) (19) 18.11.05

DEFENDERS
3 Marco **KOMENDA** (27) 26.11.96
5 Carl **JOHANSSON** (Swe) (30) 23.05.94
14 Max **GESCHWILL** (23) 07.07.01
17 Timo **BECKER** (27) 25.03.97
23 Lasse **ROSENBOOM** (22) 19.01.02
27 Tymoteusz **PUCHACZ** (Pol) (25) 23.01.99
33 Dominik **JAVORCEK** (Svk) (22) 02.11.02
34 Colin **KLEINE-BEKEL** (21) 24.01.03

MIDFIELDERS
4 Patrick **ERRAS** (29) 21.01.95
6 Marko **IVEZIC** (Srb) (22) 02.12.01
7 Steven **SKRZYBSKI** (32) 18.11.92
8 Finn **PORATH** (37) 23.02.97
10 Lewis **HOLTBY** (34) 18.09.90
15 Marvin **SCHULZ** (29) 15.01.95
22 Nicolai **REMBERG** (24) 19.06.00
24 Magnus **KNUDSEN** (Nor) (23) 15.07.01
28 Aurel **WAGBE** (20) 04.02.04
37 Armin **GIGOVIC** (Bih) (22) 06.04.02

FORWARDS
9 Benedikt **PICHLER** (Aut) (27) 20.07.97
11 Alexander **BERNHARDSSON** (Swe) (26) 08.09.98
16 Andu **KELATI** (22) 13.08.02
18 Shuto **MACHINO** (Jpn) (25) 30.09.99
19 Phil **HARRES** (22) 25.03.02
20 Fiete **ARP** (24) 06.01.00

COACH
Marcel **RAPP** (45) 16.04.79

MAINZ

GOALKEEPERS
1 Lasse **RIESS** (23) 27.07.01
27 Robin **ZENTNER** (30) 28.10.94
33 Daniel **BATZ** (33) 12.01.91

DEFENDERS
2 Phillipp **MWENE** (Aut) (30) 29.01.94
3 Moritz **JENZ** (25) 30.04.99
5 Maxim **LEITSCH** (26) 18.05.98
16 Stefan **BELL** (33) 24.08.91
19 Antony **CACI** (Fra) (27) 01.07.97
21 Danny **DA COSTA** (31) 13.07.93
22 Nikolas **VERATSCHNIG** (Aut) (21) 24.01.03
25 Andreas **HANCHE-OLSEN** (Nor) (27) 17.01.97
30 Silvan **WIDMER** (Sui) (31) 05.03.93
47 Maxim **DAL** (18) 26.01.06

MIDFIELDERS
4 Aymen **BARKOK** (Mar) (26) 21.05.98
6 Kaishu **SANO** (Jpn) (23) 30.12.00
7 **LEE** Jae-sung (Kor) (32) 10.08.92
8 Paul **NEBEL** (22) 10.10.02
14 **HONG** Hyun-seok (Kor) (25) 16.06.99
18 Nadiem **AMIRI** (28) 27.10.96
31 Dominik **KOHR** (30) 31.01.94

FORWARDS
9 Karim **ONISIWO** (Aut) (32) 17.03.92
11 Armindo **SIEB** (21) 17.02.03
17 Gabriel **VIDOVIC** (Cro) (20) 01.12.03
29 Jonathan **BURKARDT** (24) 11.07.00
44 Nelson **WEIPER** (19) 17.03.05

COACH
Bo **HENRIKSON** (Den) (49) 07.02.75

RB LEIPZIG

GOALKEEPERS
1 Peter **GULACSI** (Hun) (34) 06.05.90
25 Leopold **ZINGERLE** (30) 10.04.94
26 Maarten **VANDERVOORDT** (Bel) (22) 26.02.02

DEFENDERS
3 Lutsharel **GEERTRUIDA** (Ned) (24) 18.07.00
4 Willi **ORBAN** (Hun) (32) 03.11.92
5 El Chadaille **BITSHIABU** (Fra) (19) 16.05.05
16 Lukas **KLOSTERMANN** (28) 03.06.96
22 David **RAUM** (26) 22.04.98
23 Castello **LUKEBA** (Fra) (21) 17.12.02
39 Benjamin **HENRICHS** (27) 23.02.97

MIDFIELDERS
6 Eljif **ELMAS** (Mkd) (25) 24.09.99
8 Amadou **HAIDARA** (Mli) (26) 31.01.98
10 Xavi **SIMONS** (Ned) (21) 21.04.03
13 Nicolas **SEIWALD** (Aut) (23) 04.05.01
14 Christoph **BAUMGARTNER** (Aut) (25) 01.08.99
18 Arthur **VERMEEREN** (Bel) (19) 07.02.05
20 Assan **OUEDRAOGO** (18) 09.05.06
24 Xaver **SCHLAGER** (Aut) (27) 28.09.97
44 Kevin **KAMPL** (Svn) (34) 09.10.90

FORWARDS
7 Antonio **NUSA** (Nor) (19) 17.04.05
9 Yussuf **POULSEN** (Den) (30) 15.06.94
11 Lois **OPENDA** (Bel) (24) 16.02.00
19 Andre **SILVA** (Por) (29) 06.11.95
30 Benjamin **SESKO** (Svn) (21) 31.05.03

COACH
Marco **ROSE** (48) 11.09.76

ST PAULI

GOALKEEPERS
1 Ben **VOLL** (23) 09.12.00
22 Nikola **VASILJ** (Bih) (28) 02.12.95
28 Soren **AHLERS** (27) 09.09.97
30 Sascha **BURCHERT** (35) 30.10.89

DEFENDERS
2 Manolis **SALIAKAS** (Gre) (28) 12.09.96
3 Karol **METS** (Est) (31) 16.05.93
4 David **NEMETH** (Aut) (23) 18.03.01
5 Hauke **WAHL** (30) 15.04.94
8 Eric **SMITH** (Swe) (27) 08.01.97
14 Fin **STEVENS** (Wal) (21) 10.04.03
21 Lars **RITZKA** (26) 07.05.98
23 Philipp **TREU** (23) 03.12.00
25 Adam **DZWIGALA** (Pol) (29) 25.09.95
34 Muhammad **DAHABA** (19) 07.05.05

MIDFIELDERS
7 Jackson **IRVINE** (Aus) (31) 07.03.93
16 Carlo **BOUKHALFA** (25) 03.05.99
20 Erik **AHLSTRAND** (Swe) (23) 14.10.01
24 Connor **METCALFE** (Aus) (25) 05.11.99
39 Robert **WAGNER** (21) 14.07.03

FORWARDS
10 Danel **SINANI** (Lux) (27) 05.04.97
11 Johannes **EGGSTEIN** (26) 08.05.98
17 Oladapo **AFOLAYAN** (Eng) (27) 11.09.97
18 Scott **BANKS** (Sco) (23) 26.09.01
19 Andreas **ALBERS** (Den) (34) 23.03.90
26 Elias **SAAD** (Tun) (24) 27.12.99
27 Simon **ZOLLER** (33) 26.06.91
29 Morgan **GUILAVOGUI** (Gui) (26) 10.03.98
33 **MAURIDES** (Bra) (30) 10.03.94

COACH
Alexander **BLESSIN** (51) 28.05.73

STUTTGART

GOALKEEPERS
1 Fabian **BREDLOW** (29) 02.03.95
21 Stefan **DRLJACA** (25) 20.04.99
33 Alexander **NUBEL** (28) 30.09.96
41 Dennis **SEIMEN** (18) 01.12.05

DEFENDERS
2 Ameen **AL DAKHIL** (Bel) (22) 06.03.02
3 Ramon **HENDRIKS** (Ned) (23) 18.07.01
4 Josha **VAGNOMAN** (23) 11.12.00
7 Maximilian **MITTELSTADT** (27) 18.03.97
13 Frans **KRATZIG** (21) 14.01.03
15 Pascal **STENZEL** (28) 20.03.96
20 Leonidas **STERGIOU** (Sui) (22) 03.03.02
23 Dan-Axel **ZAGADOU** (Fra) (25) 03.06.99
24 Jeff **CHABOT** (26) 12.02.98
29 Anthony **ROUAULT** (Fra) (23) 29.05.01
45 Anrie **CHASE** (Jpn) (20) 24.03.04

MIDFIELDERS
5 Yannik **KEITEL** (24) 15.02.00
6 Angelo **STILLER** (23) 04.04.01
8 Enzo **MILLOT** (Fra) (22) 17.08.02
16 Atakan **KARAZOR** (Tur) (28) 13.10.96
28 Nikolas **NARTEY** (Den) (24) 22.02.00
32 Fabian **RIEDER** (Sui) (22) 16.02.02

FORWARDS
9 Ermedin **DEMIROVIC** (Bih) (26) 25.03.98
10 El Bilal **TOURE** (Mli) (23) 03.10.01
11 Nick **WOLTEMADE** (22) 14.02.02
17 Justin **DIEHL** (19) 27.11.04
18 Jamie **LEWELING** (23) 26.02.01
19 Wahid **FAGHIR** (Den) (21) 29.07.03
22 Thomas **KASTANARAS** (21) 09.01.03
26 Deniz **UNDAV** (28) 19.07.96
27 Chris **FUHRICH** (26) 09.01.98
40 Luca **RAIMUND** (19) 09.04.05

COACH
Sebastian **HOENESS** (42) 12.05.82

New cap...Jamie Leweling recently scored on his Germany debut

UNION BERLIN

GOALKEEPERS
1 Frederik **RONNOW** (Den) (32) 04.08.92
25 Carl **KLAUS** (30) 16.01.94
37 Alexander **SCHWOLOW** (32) 02.06.92
39 Yannic **STEIN** (20) 17.09.04

DEFENDERS
2 Kevin **VOGT** (33) 23.09.91
4 Diogo **LEITE** (Por) (25) 23.01.99
5 Danilho **DOEKHI** (Ned) (26) 30.06.98
14 Leopold **QUERFELD** (Aut) (20) 20.12.03
15 Tom **ROTHE** (20) 29.10.04
18 Josip **JURANOVIC** (Cro) (29) 16.08.95
26 Jerome **ROUSSILLON** (Glp) (31) 06.01.93
28 Christopher **TRIMMEL** (Aut) (37) 24.02.87
41 Oluwaseun **OGBEMUDIA** (18) 18.07.06

MIDFIELDERS
8 Rani **KHEDIRA** (30) 27.01.94
11 **JEONG** Woo-yeong (Kor) (25) 20.09.99
13 Andras **SCHAFER** (Hun) (25) 13.04.99
19 Janik **HABERER** (30) 02.04.94
20 Laszlo **BENES** (Svk) (27) 09.09.97
24 Robert **SKOV** (Den) (28) 20.05.96
29 Lucas **TOUSART** (Fra) (27) 29.04.97
36 Aljoscha **KEMLEIN** (20) 02.08.04

FORWARDS
7 Yorbe **VERTESSEN** (Bel) (23) 08.01.01
9 Ivan **PRTAJIN** (Cro) (28) 14.05.96
10 Kevin **VOLLAND** (32) 30.07.92
16 Benedict **HOLLERBACH** (23) 17.05.01
17 Jordan **SIEBATCHEU** (USA) (28) 26.04.96
21 Tim **SKARKE** (28) 07.09.96
23 Andrej **ILIC** (Srb) (24) 03.04.00
45 David **PREU** (20) 26.10.04

COACH
Bo **SVENSSON** (Den) (45) 04.08.79

WERDER BREMEN

GOALKEEPERS
1 Michael **ZETTERER** (29) 12.07.95
25 Markus **KOLKE** (34) 18.08.90
30 Mio **BACKHAUS** (20) 16.04.04

DEFENDERS
2 Olivier **DEMAN** (Bel) (24) 06.04.00
3 Anthony **JUNG** (33) 03.11.91
4 Niklas **STARK** (29) 14.04.95
5 Amos **PIEPER** (26) 17.01.98
8 Mitchell **WEISER** (30) 21.04.94
13 Milos **VELJKOVIC** (Srb) (29) 26.09.95
19 Derrick **KOHN** (25) 04.02.99
22 Julian **MALATINI** (Arg) (23) 31.05.01
27 Felix **AGU** (25) 27.09.99
32 Marco **FRIEDL** (Aut) (26) 16.03.98

MIDFIELDERS
6 Jens **STAGE** (Den) (28) 08.11.96
10 Leonardo **BITTENCOURT** (30) 19.12.93
14 Senne **LYNEN** (Bel) (25) 19.02.99
18 Naby **KEITA** (Gui) (29) 10.02.95
20 Romano **SCHMID** (Aut) (24) 27.01.00
21 Isak **HANSEN-AAROEN** (Nor) (20) 22.08.04
28 Skelly **ALVERO** (Fra) (22) 04.05.02
35 Leon **OPITZ** (19) 11.04.05

FORWARDS
7 Marvin **DUCKSCH** (30) 07.03.94
11 Justin **NJINMAH** (24) 15.11.00
15 Oliver **BURKE** (Sco) (27) 07.04.97
17 Marco **GRULL** (Aut) (26) 06.07.98
33 Abdenego **NANKISHI** (22) 06.07.02
42 Keke **TOPP** (20) 25.03.04

COACH
Ole **WERNER** (36) 04.05.88

WOLFSBURG

GOALKEEPERS
1 Kamil **GRABARA** (Pol) (25) 08.01.99
12 Pavao **PERVAN** (Aut) (37) 13.11.87
29 Marius **MULLER** (31) 12.07.93
30 Niklas **KLINGER** (29) 13.10.95

DEFENDERS
2 Kilian **FISCHER** (24) 12.10.00
3 Sebastiaan **BORNAUW** (Bel) (25) 22.03.99
4 Konstantinos **KOULIERAKIS** (Gre) (20) 28.11.03
5 Cedric **ZESIGER** (Sui) (26) 24.06.98
13 **ROGERIO** (Bra) (26) 13.01.98
18 Denis **VAVRO** (Svk) (28) 10.04.96
20 Ridle **BAKU** (26) 08.04.98
21 Joakim **MAEHLE** (Den) (27) 20.05.97
22 Mathys **ANGELY** (Fra) (17) 21.04.07
33 David **ODOGU** (18) 03.06.06

MIDFIELDERS
6 Aster **VRANCKX** (Bel) (22) 04.10.02
8 Salih **OZCAN** (Tur) (26) 11.01.98
16 Jakub **KAMINSKI** (Pol) (22) 05.06.02
19 Lovro **MAJER** (Cro) (26) 17.01.98
24 Bence **DARDAI** (18) 24.01.06
27 Maximilian **ARNOLD** (30) 27.05.94
31 Yannick **GERHARDT** (30) 12.03.94
32 Mattias **SVANBERG** (Swe) (25) 05.01.99
38 Bennit **BROGER** (18) 01.07.06
40 Kevin **PAREDES** (USA) (21) 07.05.03

FORWARDS
9 Mohamed **AMOURA** (Alg) (24) 09.05.00
10 Lukas **NMECHA** (25) 14.12.98
11 Tiago **TOMAS** (Por) (22) 16.06.02
14 Bartosz **BIALEK** (Pol) (23) 11.11.01
17 Kevin **BEHRENS** (33) 03.02.91
23 Jonas **WIND** (Den) (25) 07.02.99
39 Patrick **WIMMER** (Aut) (23) 30.05.01

COACH
Ralph **HASENHUTTL** (Aut) (57) 09.08.67

(ages as of 22.11.24)

SERIE A 2024-25

ATALANTA

GOALKEEPERS
28 Rui **PATRICIO** (Por) (36) 15.02.88
29 Marco **CARNESECCHI** (24) 01.07.00
31 Francesco **ROSSI** (33) 27.04.91

DEFENDERS
2 Rafael **TOLOI** (34) 10.10.90
3 Odilon **KOSSOUNOU** (Civ) (23) 04.01.01
4 Isak **HIEN** (Swe) (25) 13.01.99
5 Ben **GODFREY** (Eng) (26) 15.01.98
19 Berat **DJIMSITI** (Alb) (31) 19.02.93
23 Sead **KOLASINAC** (Bih) (31) 20.06.93
40 Pietro **COMI** (19) 11.06.05
41 Pietro **TORNAGHI** (18) 24.11.05
42 Giorgio **SCALVINI** (20) 11.12.03
47 Lorenzo **BERNASCONI** (21) 16.11.03
49 Tommaso **DEL LUNGO** (21) 21.11.03
93 Brandon **SOPPY** (Fra) (22) 21.02.02

MIDFIELDERS
6 Ibrahim **SULEMANA** (Gha) (21) 22.05.03
7 Juan **CUADRADO** (Col) (36) 26.05.88
8 Mario **PASALIC** (Cro) (29) 09.02.95
13 **EDERSON** (Bra) (25) 07.07.99
15 Marten **DE ROON** (Ned) (33) 29.03.91
16 Raoul **BELLANOVA** (24) 17.05.00
17 Charles **DE KETELAERE** (Bel) (23) 10.03.01
22 Matteo **RUGGERI** (22) 11.07.02
24 Lazar **SAMARDZIC** (Srb) (22) 24.02.02
25 Federico **CASSA** (18) 01.02.06
27 Marco **PALESTRA** (19) 03.03.05
43 Lorenzo **RICCIO** (18) 25.07.06
44 Marco **BRESCIANINI** (24) 20.01.00
46 Alberto **MANZONI** (19) 25.06.05
77 Davide **ZAPPACOSTA** (32) 11.06.92

FORWARDS
9 Gianluca **SCAMACCA** (25) 01.01.99
10 Nicolo **ZANIOLO** (25) 02.07.99
11 Ademola **LOOKMAN** (Nga) (27) 20.10.97
32 Mateo **RETEGUI** (25) 29.04.99
45 Dominic **VAVASSORI** (18) 09.12.05
48 Vanja **VLAHOVIC** (Srb) (20) 23.03.04

COACH
Gian Piero **GASPERINI** (66) 26.01.58

BOLOGNA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Lukasz **SKORUPSKI** (Pol) (33) 05.05.91
23 Nicola **BAGNOLINI** (20) 14.03.04
34 Federico **RAVAGLIA** (25) 11.11.99

DEFENDERS
2 Emil **HOLM** (Swe) (24) 13.05.00
3 Stefan **POSCH** (Aut) (27) 14.05.97
5 Martin **ERLIC** (Cro) (26) 24.01.98
15 Nicolo **CASALE** (26) 14.02.98
16 Tomasso **CORAZZA** (20) 29.06.04
22 Charalampos **LYKOGIANNIS** (Gre) (31) 22.10.93
26 Jhon **LUCUMI** (Col) (26) 26.06.98
29 Lorenzo **DE SILVESTRI** (36) 23.05.88
31 Sam **BEUKEMA** (Ned) (26) 17.11.98
33 Juan **MIRANDA** (Spa) (24) 19.01.00
66 Wisdom **AMEY** (19) 11.08.05

MIDFIELDERS
6 Nikola **MORO** (Cro) (26) 12.03.98
8 Remo **FREULER** (Sui) (32) 15.04.92
17 Oussama **EL AZZOUZI** (Mar) (23) 29.05.01
18 Tommaso **POBEGA** (25) 15.07.99
19 Lewis **FERGUSON** (Sco) (25) 24.08.99
20 Michel **AEBISCHER** (Sui) (27) 06.01.97
32 Naim **BYAR** (Mar) (19) 23.02.05
80 Giovanni **FABBIAN** (21) 14.01.03
82 Kacper **URBANSKI** (Pol) (20) 07.09.04

FORWARDS
7 Riccardo **ORSOLINI** (27) 24.01.97
9 Santiago **CASTRO** (Arg) (20) 18.09.04
10 Jesper **KARLSSON** (Swe) (26) 25.07.98
11 Dan **NDOYE** (Sui) (24) 25.10.00
14 Samuel **ILING-JUNIOR** (Eng) (21) 04.10.03
21 Jens **ODGAARD** (Den) (25) 31.03.99
24 Thijs **DALLINGA** (Ned) (24) 03.08.00
28 Nicolo **CAMBIAGHI** (23) 28.12.00
30 Benjamin **DOMINGUEZ** (Arg) (21) 19.09.03
96 Tommaso **RAVAGLIOLI** (18) 20.02.06

COACH
Vincenzo **ITALIANO** (46) 10.12.77

CAGLIARI

GOALKEEPERS
1 Giuseppe **CIOCCI** (22) 24.01.02
22 Simone **SCUFFET** (28) 31.05.96
31 Velizar **ILIEV** (Bul) (19) 20.07.05
71 Alen **SHERRI** (Alb) (26) 15.12.97

DEFENDERS
3 Tommaso **AUGELLO** (30) 30.08.94
6 Sebastiano **LUPERTO** (28) 06.09.96
23 Mateusz **WIETESKA** (Pol) (27) 11.02.97
24 Jose **PALOMINO** (Arg) (34) 05.01.90
26 Yerry **MINA** (Col) (30) 23.09.94
28 Gabriele **ZAPPA** (24) 22.12.99
33 Adam **OBERT** (Svk) (22) 23.08.02
34 Andrea **COGONI** (18) 04.07.06
37 **PAULO** (Bra) (30) 15.07.94

MIDFIELDERS
8 Michel **ADOPO** (Fra) (24) 19.07.00
10 Nicolas **VIOLA** (35) 12.10.89
14 Alessandro **DEIOLA** (29) 01.08.95
16 Matteo **PRATI** (20) 28.12.03
18 Razvan **MARIN** (Rom) (28) 23.05.96
19 Nadir **ZORTEA** (25) 19.06.99
21 Jakub **JANKTO** (Cze) (28) 19.01.96
29 Antoine **MAKOUMBOU** (Cgo) (26) 18.07.98
70 Gianluca **GAETANO** (24) 05.05.00

FORWARDS
9 Gianluca **LAPADULA** (Per) (34) 07.02.90
30 Leonardo **PAVOLETTI** (35) 26.11.88
77 Zito **LUVUMBO** (Ang) (22) 09.03.02
80 Kingstone **MUTANDWA** (Zam) (21) 05.01.03
91 Roberto **PICCOLI** (23) 27.01.01
97 Mattia **FELICI** (23) 17.04.01

COACH
Davide **NICOLA** (51) 05.03.73

COMO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Emil **AUDERO** (27) 18.01.97
12 Pierre **BOLCHINI** (25) 27.02.99
22 Mauro **VIGORITO** (34) 22.05.90
25 Pepe **REINA** (Spa) (42) 31.08.82

DEFENDERS
2 Marc Oliver **KEMPF** (Ger) (29) 28.01.95
3 Marco **SALA** (25) 04.06.99
5 Edoardo **GOLDANIGA** (31) 02.11.93
13 Alberto **DOSSENA** (26) 13.10.98
15 Fellipe **JACK** (Bra) (18) 12.01.06
18 Alberto **MORENO** (Spa) (32) 05.07.92
77 Ignace **VAN DER BREMPT** (Bel) (22) 01.04.02
93 Federico **BARBA** (31) 01.09.93

MIDFIELDERS
4 Ben **KONE** (Civ) (24) 14.03.00
6 Alessio **IOVINE** (33) 01.02.91
8 Daniele **BASELLI** (32) 12.03.92
20 Sergi **ROBERTO** (Spa) (32) 07.02.92
23 Maximo **PERRONE** (Arg) (21) 07.01.03
26 Yannik **ENGELHARDT** (Ger) (23) 07.02.01
27 Matthias **BRAUNODER** (Aut) (22) 27.03.02
33 Lucas **DA CUNHA** (Fra) (23) 09.06.01
36 Luca **MAZZITELLI** (29) 15.11.95
79 Nico **PAZ** (Spa) (20) 08.09.04

FORWARDS
7 Gabriel **STREFEZZA** (Bra) (27) 18.04.97
9 Alessandro **GABRIELLONI** (30) 10.07.94
10 Patrick **CUTRONE** (26) 03.01.98
11 Andrea **BELOTTI** (30) 20.12.93
14 Ali **JASIM** (Irq) (20) 20.01.04
16 Alieu **FADERA** (Gam) (23) 03.11.01
17 Alberto **CERRI** (28) 16.04.96
90 Simone **VERDI** (32) 12.07.92

COACH
Cesc **FABREGAS** (Spa) (37) 04.05.87

EMPOLI

GOALKEEPERS
1 Samuele **PERISAN** (27) 21.08.97
12 Jacopo **SEGHETTI** (19) 17.02.05
23 Devis **VASQUEZ** (Col) (26) 12.05.98
98 Federico **BRANCOLINI** (23) 14.07.01

DEFENDERS
2 Saba **GOGLICHIDZE** (Geo) (20) 25.06.04
3 Giuseppe **PEZZELLA** (26) 29.11.97
7 Junior **SAMBIA** (Fra) (28) 07.09.96
13 Liberato **CACACE** (Nzl) (24) 27.09.00
15 Saba **SAZONOV** (Geo) (22) 01.02.02
21 Mattia **VITI** (22) 24.01.02
22 Mattia **DE SCIGLIO** (32) 20.10.92
24 Tyronne **EBUEHI** (Nga) (28) 16.12.95
31 Lorenzo **TOSTO** (18) 29.01.06
34 Ardian **ISMAJLI** (Alb) (28) 30.09.96
35 Luca **MARIANUCCI** (20) 23.07.04

MIDFIELDERS
5 Alberto **GRASSI** (29) 07.03.95
6 Liam **HENDERSON** (Sco) (28) 25.04.96
8 Tino **ANJORIN** (Eng) (22) 23.11.01
10 Jacopo **FAZZINI** (21) 16.03.03
16 Luca **BELARDINELLI** (23) 14.03.01
27 Szymon **ZURKOWSKI** (Pol) (27) 25.09.97
32 Nicolas **HAAS** (Sui) (28) 23.01.96
93 Youssef **MALEH** (Mar) (26) 22.08.98

FORWARDS
9 Pietro **PELLEGRI** (23) 17.03.01
11 Emmanuel **GYASI** (Gha) (30) 11.01.94
17 Ola **SOLBAKKEN** (Nor) (26) 07.09.98
19 Emmanuel **EKONG** (Swe) (22) 25.06.02
29 Lorenzo **COLOMBO** (22) 08.03.02
77 Bogdan **POPOV** (Ukr) (17) 04.04.07
90 Ismael **KONATE** (18) 29.03.06
99 Sebastiano **ESPOSITO** (22) 02.07.02

COACH
Roberto **D'AVERSA** (49) 12.08.75

FIORENTINA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Pietro **TERRACCIANO** (34) 08.03.90
30 Tommaso **MARTINELLI** (18) 06.01.06
43 David **DE GEA** (Spa) (34) 07.11.90
53 Oliver **CHRISTENSEN** (Den) (25) 22.03.99

DEFENDERS
2 **DODO** (Bra) (26) 17.11.98
3 Cristiano **BIRAGHI** (32) 01.09.92
5 Marin **PONGRACIC** (Cro) (27) 11.09.97
6 Luca **RANIERI** (25) 23.04.99
15 Pietro **COMUZZO** (19) 20.02.05
21 Robin **GOSENS** (Ger) (30) 05.07.94
22 Matias **MORENO** (Arg) (21) 24.09.03
27 Leonardo **BARONCELLI** (19) 13.08.05
28 Lucas **MARTINEZ QUARTA** (Arg) (28) 10.05.96
33 Michael **KAYODE** (20) 10.07.04
60 Eddy **KOUADIO** (18) 07.05.06
65 Fabiano **PARISI** (24) 09.11.00

MIDFIELDERS
4 Edoardo **BOVE** (22) 16.05.02
8 Rolando **MANDRAGORA** (27) 29.06.97
23 Andrea **COLPANI** (25) 11.05.99
24 Amir **RICHARDSON** (Mar) (22) 24.01.02
29 Yacine **ADLI** (Fra) (24) 29.07.00
32 Danilo **CATALDI** (30) 06.08.94

FORWARDS
7 Riccardo **SOTTIL** (25) 03.06.99
9 Lucas **BELTRAN** (Arg) (23) 29.03.01
10 Albert **GUDMUNDSSON** (Isl) (27) 15.06.97
11 Jonathan **IKONE** (Fra) (26) 02.05.98
20 Moise **KEAN** (24) 28.02.00
99 Christian **KOUAME** (Civ) (26) 06.12.97

COACH
Raffaele **PALLADINO** (40) 17.04.84

GENOA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Nicola **LEALI** (31) 17.02.93
39 Daniele **SOMMARIVA** (27) 18.07.97
95 Pierluigi **GOLLINI** (29) 18.03.95
99 Franz **STOLZ** (Aut) (23) 14.02.01

DEFENDERS
3 Aaron **MARTIN** (Spa) (27) 22.04.97
4 Koni **DE WINTER** (Bel) (22) 12.06.02
13 Mattia **BANI** (30) 10.12.93
14 Alessandro **VOGLIACCO** (26) 14.09.98
15 Brooke **NORTON-CUFFY** (Eng) (20) 12.01.04
20 Stefano **SABELLI** (31) 13.01.93
22 Johan **VASQUEZ** (Mex) (26) 22.10.98
27 Alessandro **MARCANDALLI** (22) 25.02.02
33 Alan **MATTURRO** (Uru) (20) 11.10.04
59 Alessandro **ZANOLI** (24) 03.10.00
69 Honest **AHANOR** (18) 23.02.08

MIDFIELDERS
2 Morten **THORSBY** (Nor) (28) 05.05.96
8 Emil **BOHINEN** (Nor) (25) 12.03.99
11 Gaston **PEREIRO** (Uru) (29) 11.06.95
17 Ruslan **MALINOVSKYI** (Ukr) (31) 04.05.93
23 Fabio **MIRETTI** (21) 03.08.03
32 Morten **FRENDRUP** (Den) (23) 07.04.01
47 Milan **BADELJ** (Cro) (35) 25.02.89
53 Lior **KASA** (Isr) (19) 27.09.05
55 Federico **ACCORNERO** (20) 05.02.04
72 Filippo **MELEGONI** (25) 18.02.99
73 Patrizio **MASINI** (23) 27.01.01

FORWARDS
9 **VITINHA** (Por) (24) 15.03.00
10 Junior **MESSIAS** (Bra) (33) 13.05.91
18 Caleb **EKUBAN** (Gha) (30) 23.03.94
19 Andrea **PINAMONTI** (25) 19.05.99
21 Jeff **EKHATOR** (18) 11.11.06
30 David **ANKEYE** (Nga) (22) 22.05.02
45 Mario **BALOTELLI** (34) 12.08.90

COACH
Alberto **GILARDINO** (42) 05.07.82

INTERNAZIONALE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Yann **SOMMER** (Sui) (35) 17.12.88
12 Raffaele **DI GENNARO** (31) 03.10.93
13 Josep **MARTINEZ** (Spa) (26) 27.05.98

DEFENDERS
2 Denzel **DUMFRIES** (Ned) (28) 18.04.96
6 Stefan **DE VRIJ** (Ned) (32) 05.02.92
15 Francesco **ACERBI** (36) 10.02.88
28 Benjamin **PAVARD** (Fra) (28) 28.03.96
30 **CARLOS AUGUSTO** (Bra) (25) 07.01.99
31 Yann-Aurel **BISSECK** (Ger) (23) 29.11.00
32 Federico **DIMARCO** (27) 10.11.97
36 Matteo **DARMIAN** (34) 02.12.89
42 Tomas **PALACIOS** (Arg) (21) 28.04.03
95 Alessandro **BASTONI** (25) 13.04.99

MIDFIELDERS
7 Piotr **ZIELINSKI** (Pol) (30) 20.05.94
16 Davide **FRATTESI** (25) 22.09.99
17 Tajon **BUCHANAN** (Can) (25) 08.02.99
20 Hakan **CALHANOGLU** (Tur) (30) 08.02.94
21 Kristjan **ASLLANI** (Alb) (22) 09.03.02
22 Henrikh **MKHITARYAN** (Arm) (35) 21.01.89
23 Nicolo **BARELLA** (27) 07.02.97

FORWARDS
8 Marko **ARNAUTOVIC** (Aut) (35) 19.04.89
9 Marcus **THURAM** (Fra) (27) 06.08.97
10 Lautaro **MARTINEZ** (Arg) (27) 22.08.97
11 Joaquin **CORREA** (Arg) (30) 13.08.94
99 Mehdi **TAREMI** (Irn) (32) 18.07.92

COACH
Simone **INZAGHI** (48) 05.04.76

JUVENTUS

GOALKEEPERS
1 Mattia **PERIN** (32) 10.11.92
23 Carlo **PINSOGLIO** (34) 16.03.90
29 Michele **DI GREGORIO** (27) 27.07.97

DEFENDERS
3 **BREMER** (Bra) (27) 18.03.97
4 Federico **GATTI** (26) 24.06.98
6 **DANILO** (Bra) (33) 15.07.91
15 Pierre **KALULU** (Fra) (24) 05.06.00
27 Andrea **CAMBIASO** (24) 20.02.00
32 Juan **CABAL** (Col) (23) 08.01.01
37 Nicolo **SAVONA** (21) 19.03.03
40 Jonas **ROUHI** (Swe) (20) 07.01.04

MIDFIELDERS
5 Manuel **LOCATELLI** (26) 08.01.98
8 Teun **KOOPMEINERS** (Ned) (26) 28.02.98
16 Weston **McKENNIE** (USA) (26) 28.08.98
17 Vasilije **ADZIC** (Mne) (18) 12.05.06
18 **ARTHUR** (Bra) (28) 12.08.96
19 Khephren **THURAM** (Fra) (23) 26.03.01
21 Nicolo **FAGIOLI** (23) 12.02.01
26 **DOUGLAS LUIZ** (Bra) (26) 09.05.98

FORWARDS
7 Francisco **CONCEICAO** (Por) (21) 14.12.02
9 Dusan **VLAHOVIC** (Srb) (24) 28.01.00
10 Kenan **YILDIZ** (Tur) (19) 04.05.05
11 Nicolas **GONZALEZ** (Arg) (26) 06.04.98
14 Arkadiusz **MILIK** (Pol) (30) 28.02.94
22 Timothy **WEAH** (USA) (24) 22.02.00
36 Lorenzo **ANGHELE** (19) 25.02.05
51 Samuel **MBANGULA** (Bel) (20) 16.01.04

COACH
Thiago **MOTTA** (42) 28.08.82

LAZIO

GOALKEEPERS
35 Christos **MANDAS** (Gre) (23) 17.09.01
55 Alessio **FURLANETTO** (22) 07.02.02
94 Ivan **PROVEDEL** (30) 17.03.94

DEFENDERS
2 Samuel **GIGOT** (Fra) (31) 12.10.93
3 Luca **PELLEGRINI** (25) 07.03.99
4 **PATRIC** (Spa) (31) 17.04.93
13 Alessio **ROMAGNOLI** (29) 12.01.95
23 Elseid **HYSAJ** (Alb) (30) 02.02.94
30 Nuno **TAVARES** (Por) (24) 26.01.00
34 Mario **GILA** (Spa) (24) 29.08.00
77 Adam **MARUSIC** (Mne) (32) 17.10.92
78 Alessandro **MILANI** (Ven) (19) 14.06.05

MIDFIELDERS
5 Matias **VECINO** (Uru) (33) 24.08.91
6 Nicolo **ROVELLA** (22) 04.12.01
7 Fisayo **DELE-BASHIRU** (Nga) (23) 06.02.01
8 Matteo **GUENDOUZI** (Fra) (25) 14.04.99
22 Gaetano **CASTROVILLI** (27) 17.02.97
26 Toma **BASIC** (Cro) (27) 25.11.96
28 Andre **ANDERSON** (25) 23.09.99
29 Manuel **LAZZARI** (30) 29.11.93
92 Jean-Daniel **AKPA-AKPRO** (Civ) (32) 11.10.92

FORWARDS
9 **PEDRO** (Spa) (37) 28.07.87
10 Mattia **ZACCAGNI** (29) 16.06.95
11 Taty **CASTELLANOS** (Arg) (26) 03.10.98
14 Tijjani **NOSLIN** (Ned) (25) 07.07.99
18 Gustav **ISAKSEN** (Den) (23) 19.04.01
19 Boulaye **DIA** (Sen) (28) 16.11.96
20 Loum **TCHAOUNA** (Fra) (21) 08.09.03

COACH
Marco **BARONI** (61) 11.09.63

LECCE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Christian **FRUCHTL** (Ger) (24) 28.01.00
30 Wladimiro **FALCONE** (29) 12.04.95
32 Jasper **SAMOOJA** (Fin) (21) 21.07.03
98 Alexandru **BORBEI** (Rom) (21) 27.06.03

DEFENDERS
2 Andy **PELMARD** (Fra) (24) 12.03.00
4 Kialonda **GASPAR** (Ang) (27) 27.09.97
6 Federico **BASCHIROTTO** (28) 20.09.96
12 Frederic **GUILBERT** (Fra) (29) 24.12.94
19 Gaby **JEAN** (Fra) (24) 19.02.00
21 Kevin **BONIFAZI** (28) 19.05.96
25 Antonino **GALLO** (24) 05.01.00
28 Sebastian **ESPOSITO** (Aus) (19) 21.04.05
42 Vernon **ADDO** (Ned) (19) 24.05.05

MIDFIELDERS
5 Medon **BERISHA** (Alb) (21) 21.10.03
8 Hamza **RAFIA** (Tun) (25) 02.04.99
10 Remi **OUDIN** (Fra) (28) 18.11.96
14 Thorir **HELGASON** (Isl) (24) 28.09.00
16 Joan **GONZALEZ** (Spa) (22) 01.02.02
20 Ylber **RAMADANI** (Alb) (28) 12.04.96
27 Ed **McJANNET** (Irl) (20) 25.01.04
29 Lassana **COULIBALY** (Mli) (28) 10.04.96
36 Filip **MARCHWINSKI** (Pol) (22) 10.01.02
75 Balthazar **PIERRET** (Fra) (24) 15.05.00
77 Mohamed **KABA** (Fra) (23) 27.10.01

FORWARDS
3 Ante **REBIC** (Cro) (31) 21.09.93
7 Tete **MORENTE** (Spa) (27) 04.12.96
9 Nikola **KRSTOVIC** (Mne) (24) 05.04.00
11 Nicola **SANSONE** (33) 10.09.91
13 Patrick **DORGU** (Den) (20) 26.10.04
22 Lameck **BANDA** (Zam) (23) 29.01.01
23 Rares **BURNETE** (Rom) (20) 31.01.04
24 Jeppe **CORFITZEN** (Den) (19) 29.12.04
34 Dario **DAKA** (Alb) (20) 24.01.04
40 Luis **HASA** (20) 06.01.04
50 Santiago **PIEROTTI** (Arg) (23) 03.04.01

COACH
Luca **GOTTI** (57) 13.09.67

MILAN

GOALKEEPERS
16 Mike **MAIGNAN** (Fra) (29) 03.07.95
25 Noah **RAVEYRE** (Fra) (19) 22.06.05
57 Marco **SPORTIELLO** (32) 10.05.92
69 Lapo **NAVA** (20) 22.01.04
96 Lorenzo **TORRIANI** (19) 31.01.05

DEFENDERS
2 Davide **CALABRIA** (27) 06.12.96
19 Theo **HERNANDEZ** (Fra) (27) 06.10.97
20 Alex **JIMENEZ** (Spa) (19) 08.05.05
22 **EMERSON ROYAL** (Bra) (25) 14.01.99
23 Fikayo **TOMORI** (Eng) (26) 19.12.97
24 Alessandro **FLORENZI** (33) 11.03.91
28 Malick **THIAW** (Ger) (23) 08.08.01
31 Strahinja **PAVLOVIC** (Srb) (23) 24.05.01
33 Davide **BARTESAGHI** (18) 29.12.05
42 Filippo **TERRACCIANO** (21) 08.02.03
46 Matteo **GABBIA** (25) 21.10.99

MIDFIELDERS
4 Ismael **BENNACER** (Alg) (26) 01.12.97
8 Ruben **LOFTUS-CHEEK** (Eng) (28) 23.01.96
14 Tijjani **REIJNDERS** (Ned) (26) 29.07.98
18 Kevin **ZEROLI** (19) 11.01.05
29 Youssouf **FOFANA** (Fra) (25) 10.01.99
80 Yunus **MUSAH** (USA) (21) 29.11.02
81 Victor **ELETU** (Nga) (19) 01.04.05
91 Hugo **CUENCA** (Par) (19) 08.01.05

FORWARDS
7 Alvaro **MORATA** (Spa) (32) 23.10.92
9 Luka **JOVIC** (Srb) (26) 23.12.97
10 Rafael **LEAO** (Por) (25) 10.06.99
11 Christian **PULISIC** (USA) (26) 18.09.98
17 Noah **OKAFOR** (Sui) (24) 24.05.00
21 Samuel **CHUKWUEZE** (Nga) (25) 22.05.99
73 Francesco **CAMARDA** (16) 10.03.08
90 Tammy **ABRAHAM** (Eng) (27) 02.10.97

COACH
Paulo **FONSECA** (Por) (51) 05.03.73

MONZA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alessio **CRAGNO** (30) 28.06.94
21 Semuel **PIZZIGNACCO** (23) 01.09.01
30 Stefano **TURATI** (23) 05.09.01
51 Davide **BIFULCO** (18) 04.01.06
56 Andrea **VAILATI** (17) 04.08.07
69 Andrea **MAZZA** (20) 19.03.04

DEFENDERS
4 Armando **IZZO** (32) 02.03.92
5 Luca **CALDIROLA** (33) 01.02.91
13 Pedro **PEREIRA** (Por) (26) 22.01.98
19 Samuele **BIRINDELLI** (25) 19.07.99
22 Pablo **MARI** (Spa) (31) 31.08.93
33 Danilo **D'AMBROSIO** (36) 09.09.88
44 Andrea **CARBONI** (23) 04.02.01
52 Nicolo **POSTIGLIONE** (19) 16.04.05

MIDFIELDERS
6 Roberto **GAGLIARDINI** (30) 07.04.94
12 Stefano **SENSI** (29) 05.08.95
27 Mattia **VALOTI** (31) 06.09.93
32 Matteo **PESSINA** (27) 21.04.97
38 Warren **BONDO** (Fra) (21) 15.09.03
42 Alessandro **BIANCO** (22) 01.10.02
53 Endris **SCARAMELLI** (18) 19.09.06
54 Alessandro **BERRETTA** (19) 28.06.05
77 Giorgos **KYRIAKOPOULOS** (Gre) (28) 05.02.96

FORWARDS
10 Gianluca **CAPRARI** (31) 30.07.93
11 Milan **DURIC** (Bih) (34) 22.05.90
14 Daniel **MALDINI** (23) 11.10.01
20 Omari **FORSON** (Eng) (20) 20.07.04
24 Mirko **MARIC** (Bih) (29) 16.05.95
37 Andrea **PETAGNA** (29) 30.06.95
47 Dany **MOTA** (Por) (26) 02.05.98
55 Kevin **MARTINS** (19) 31.01.05
80 Samuele **VIGNATO** (20) 24.02.04
84 Patrick **CIURRIA** (29) 09.02.95

COACH
Alessandro **NESTA** (48) 19.03.76

NAPOLI

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alex **MERET** (27) 22.03.97
12 Claudio **TURI** (19) 06.05.05
14 Nikita **CONTINI** (28) 21.05.96
25 Elia **CAPRILE** (23) 25.08.01

DEFENDERS
4 Alessandro **BUONGIORNO** (25) 06.06.99
5 **JUAN JESUS** (Bra) (33) 10.06.91
13 Amir **RRAHMANI** (Kos) (30) 24.02.94
16 Rafa **MARIN** (Spa) (22) 19.05.02
17 Mathias **OLIVERA** (Uru) (27) 31.10.97
22 Giovanni **DI LORENZO** (31) 04.08.93
30 Pasquale **MAZZOCCHI** (29) 27.07.95
37 Leonardo **SPINAZZOLA** (31) 25.03.93

MIDFIELDERS
6 Billy **GILMOUR** (Sco) (23) 11.06.01
8 Scott **McTOMINAY** (Sco) (27) 08.12.96
60 Francesco **GIOIELLI** (20) 26.02.04
68 Stanislav **LOBOTKA** (Svk) (29) 25.11.94
90 Michael **FOLORUNSHO** (26) 07.02.98
99 Frank **ANGUISSA** (Cmr) (29) 16.11.95

FORWARDS
7 David **NERES** (Bra) (27) 03.03.97
11 Romelu **LUKAKU** (Bel) (31) 13.05.93
18 Giovanni **SIMEONE** (Arg) (29) 05.07.95
21 Matteo **POLITANO** (31) 03.08.93
23 Alessio **ZERBIN** (25) 03.03.99
26 Cyril **NGONGE** (Bel) (24) 26.05.00
77 Khvicha **KVARATSKHELIA** (Geo) (23) 12.02.01
81 Giacomo **RASPADORI** (24) 18.02.00

COACH
Antonio **CONTE** (55) 31.07.69

PARMA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Leandro **CHICHIZOLA** (Arg) (34) 27.03.90
31 Zion **SUZUKI** (Jpn) (22) 21.08.02
40 Edoardo **CORVI** (23) 23.03.01
60 Manuel **MORETTA** (18) 15.01.06

DEFENDERS
3 Yordan **OSORIO** (Ven) (30) 10.05.94
4 Botond **BALOGH** (Hun) (22) 06.06.02
5 Lautaro **VALENTI** (Arg) (25) 14.01.99
14 Emanuele **VALERI** (25) 07.12.98
15 Enrico **DEL PRATO** (25) 10.11.99
26 Woyo **COULIBALY** (Fra) (25) 26.05.99
39 Alessandro **CIRCATI** (Aus) (21) 10.10.03
46 Giovanni **LEONI** (17) 21.12.06
77 Gianluca **DI CHIARA** (30) 26.12.93

MIDFIELDERS
8 Nahuel **ESTEVEZ** (Arg) (29) 14.11.95
10 Adrian **BERNABE** (Spa) (23) 26.05.01
16 Mandela **KEITA** (Bel) (22) 10.05.02
19 Simon **SOHM** (Sui) (23) 11.04.01
20 Antoine **HAINAUT** (Fra) (22) 18.02.02
23 Drissa **CAMARA** (Civ) (22) 18.02.02
25 Wylan **CYPRIEN** (Fra) (29) 28.01.95
27 **HERNANI** (Bra) (30) 27.03.94
61 Anas **HAJ MOHAMED** (Tun) (19) 26.03.05

FORWARDS
7 Adrian **BENEDYCZAK** (Pol) (23) 24.11.00
9 Gabriel **CHARPENTIER** (Cgo) (25) 17.05.99
11 Pontus **ALMQVIST** (Swe) (25) 10.07.99
13 Ange-Yoan **BONNY** (Fra) (21) 25.10.03
22 Matteo **CANCELLIERI** (22) 12.02.02
28 Valentin **MIHAILA** (Rom) (24) 02.02.00
62 Mateusz **KOWALSKI** (Pol) (19) 21.07.05
98 Dennis **MAN** (Rom) (26) 26.08.98

COACH
Fabio **PECCHIA** (51) 24.08.73

ROMA

GOALKEEPERS
89 Renato **MARIN** (18) 10.07.06
98 Mathew **RYAN** (Aus) (32) 08.04.92
99 Mile **SVILAR** (Srb) (25) 27.08.99

DEFENDERS
3 **ANGELINO** (Spa) (27) 04.01.97
5 Evan **NDICKA** (Civ) (25) 20.08.99
12 Saud **ABDULHAMID** (KSA) (25) 18.07.99
15 Mats **HUMMELS** (Ger) (35) 16.12.88
19 Zeki **CELIK** (Tur) (27) 17.02.97
22 Mario **HERMOSO** (Spa) (29) 18.06.95
23 Gianluca **MANCINI** (28) 17.04.96
26 Samuel **DAHL** (Swe) (21) 04.03.03
66 Buba **SANGARE** (Spa) (17) 06.08.07
72 Federico **NARDIN** (17) 18.02.07

MIDFIELDERS
4 Bryan **CRISTANTE** (29) 03.03.95
7 Lorenzo **PELLEGRINI** (28) 19.06.96
16 Leandro **PAREDES** (Arg) (30) 29.06.94
17 Manu **KONE** (Fra) (23) 17.05.01
28 Enzo **LE FEE** (Fra) (24) 03.02.00
35 Tommaso **BALDANZI** (21) 23.03.03
56 Alexis **SAELEMAEKERS** (Bel) (25) 27.06.99
59 Nicola **ZALEWSKI** (Pol) (22) 23.01.02
61 Niccolo **PISILLI** (20) 23.09.04

FORWARDS
11 Artem **DOVBYK** (Ukr) (27) 21.06.97
14 Eldor **SHOMURODOV** (Uzb) (29) 29.06.95
18 Matias **SOULE** (Arg) (21) 15.04.03
21 Paulo **DYBALA** (Arg) (31) 15.11.93
92 Stephan **EL SHAARAWY** (32) 27.10.92

COACH
Ivan **JURIC** (Cro) (49) 25.08.75

TORINO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alberto **PALEARI** (32) 29.08.92
17 Antonio **DONNARUMMA** (34) 07.07.90
32 Vanja **MILINKOVIC-SAVIC** (Srb) (27) 20.02.97
45 Francesco **PLAIA** (18) 29.03.06

DEFENDERS
3 Perr **SCHUURS** (Ned) (24) 26.11.99
4 Sebastian **WALUKIEWICZ** (Pol) (24) 05.04.00
5 Adam **MASINA** (Mar) (30) 02.01.94
13 Guillermo **MARIPAN** (Chi) (30) 06.05.94
16 Marcus **PEDERSEN** (Nor) (24) 16.07.00
21 Ali **DEMBELE** (Fra) (20) 05.01.04
23 Saul **COCO** (Eqg) (25) 09.02.99
24 Borna **SOSA** (Cro) (26) 21.01.98
80 Come **BIANAY** (Fra) (19) 13.05.05

MIDFIELDERS
8 Ivan **ILIC** (Srb) (23) 17.03.01
10 Nikola **VLASIC** (Cro) (27) 04.10.97
20 Valentino **LAZARO** (Aut) (28) 24.03.96
27 Mergim **VOJVODA** (Kos) (29) 01.02.95
28 Samuele **RICCI** (23) 21.08.01
61 Adrien **TAMEZE** (Fra) (30) 04.02.94
66 Gvidas **GINEITIS** (Ltu) (20) 15.04.04
72 Aaron **CIAMMAGLICHELLA** (19) 26.01.05
77 Karol **LINETTY** (Pol) (29) 02.02.95
84 Marco **DALLA VECCHIA** (19) 13.02.05

FORWARDS
7 Yann **KARAMOH** (Fra) (26) 08.07.98
9 Antonio **SANABRIA** (Par) (28) 04.03.96
18 Che **ADAMS** (Sco) (28) 13.07.96
79 Zanos **SAVVA** (Cyp) (18) 26.11.05
91 Duvan **ZAPATA** (Col) (33) 01.04.91
92 Alieu **NJIE** (Swe) (19) 14.05.05

COACH
Paolo **VANOLI** (52) 12.08.72

UDINESE

GOALKEEPERS
40 Maduka **OKOYE** (Nga) (25) 28.08.99
90 Razvan **SAVA** (Rom) (22) 21.06.02
93 Daniele **PADELLI** (39) 25.10.85

DEFENDERS
4 James **ABANKWAH** (Irl) (20) 16.01.04
11 Hassane **KAMARA** (Civ) (30) 05.03.94
16 Matteo **PALMA** (Ger) (16) 13.03.08
19 Kingsley **EHIZIBUE** (Ned) (29) 25.05.95
23 Enzo **EBOSSE** (Cmr) (25) 11.03.99
27 Christian **KABASELE** (Bel) (33) 24.02.91
29 Jaka **BIJOL** (Svn) (25) 05.02.99
30 Lautaro **GIANETTI** (Arg) (31) 13.11.93
31 Thomas **KRISTENSEN** (Den) (22) 17.01.02
33 Jordan **ZEMURA** (Zim) (25) 14.11.99
95 Isaak **TOURE** (Fra) (21) 28.03.03

MIDFIELDERS
5 Martin **PAYERO** (Arg) (26) 11.09.98
6 Oier **ZARRAGA** (Spa) (25) 04.01.99
8 Sandi **LOVRIC** (Svn) (26) 28.03.98
14 Arthur **ATTA** (Fra) (21) 14.01.03
25 Jesper **KARLSTROM** (Swe) (29) 21.06.95
32 Jurgen **EKKELENKAMP** (Ned) (24) 05.04.00
77 Rui **MODESTO** (Ang) (25) 07.10.99
79 David **PEJICIC** (Svn) (17) 14.06.07

FORWARDS
7 Alexis **SANCHEZ** (Chi) (35) 19.12.88
9 Keinan **DAVIS** (Eng) (26) 13.02.98
10 Florian **THAUVIN** (Fra) (31) 26.01.93
17 Lorenzo **LUCCA** (24) 10.09.00
21 Iker **BRAVO** (Spa) (19) 13.01.05
22 **BRENNER** (Bra) (24) 16.01.00
99 Damian **PIZARRO** (Chi) (19) 28.03.05

COACH
Kosta **RUNJAIC** (Ger) (53) 04.06.71

VENEZIA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Jesse **JORONEN** (Fin) (31) 21.03.93
12 Bruno **BERTINATO** (Bra) (26) 31.05.98
23 Matteo **GRANDI** (32) 12.10.92
35 Filip **STANKOVIC** (Srb) (22) 25.02.02

DEFENDERS
4 Jay **IDZES** (Idn) (24) 02.06.00
5 Ridgeciano **HAPS** (Sur) (31) 12.06.93
7 Francesco **ZAMPANO** (31) 30.09.93
15 Giorgio **ALTARE** (26) 09.08.98
21 Richie **SAGRADO** (Bel) (20) 30.01.04
25 Joel **SCHINGTIENNE** (Bel) (22) 14.08.02
27 Antonio **CANDELA** (24) 27.04.00
30 Michael **SVOBODA** (Aut) (26) 15.10.98
33 Marin **SVERKO** (Cro) (26) 04.02.98

MIDFIELDERS
6 Gianluca **BUSIO** (USA) (22) 28.05.02
11 Gaetano **ORISTANIO** (22) 28.09.02
14 Hans Nicolussi **CAVIGLIA** (24) 18.06.00
22 Domen **CRNIGOJ** (Svn) (29) 18.11.95
32 Alfred **DUNCAN** (Gha) (31) 10.03.93
38 Magnus Kofod **ANDERSEN** (Den) (25) 10.05.99
77 Mikael **ELLERTSSON** (Isl) (22) 11.03.02
79 Franco **CARBONI** (Arg) (21) 04.04.03
97 Issa **DOUMBIA** (21) 16.10.03

FORWARDS
9 Christian **GYTKJAER** (Den) (34) 06.05.90
10 John **YEBOAH** (Ecu) (24) 23.06.00
19 Bjarki **BJARKASON** (Isl) (24) 11.05.00
20 Joel **POHJANPALO** (Fin) (30) 13.09.94
45 Antonio **RAIMONDO** (20) 18.03.04
80 Saad **EL HADDAD** (Mar) (19) 24.07.05

COACH
Eusebio **DI FRANCESCO** (55) 08.09.69

VERONA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Lorenzo **MONTIPO** (28) 20.02.96
22 Alessandro **BERARDI** (33) 16.01.91
34 Simone **PERILLI** (29) 07.01.95
94 Giacomo **TONIOLO** (20) 01.04.04

DEFENDERS
3 Martin **FRESE** (Den) (26) 04.01.98
4 Flavius **DANILIUC** (Aut) (23) 27.04.01
5 Davide **FARAONI** (33) 25.10.91
12 Domagoj **BRADARIC** (Cro) (24) 10.12.99
15 Yllan **OKOU** (Fra) (21) 23.12.02
23 Giangiacomo **MAGNANI** (29) 04.10.95
27 Pawel **DAWIDOWICZ** (Pol) (29) 20.05.95
38 Jackson **TCHATCHOUA** (Cmr) (23) 14.09.01
42 Diego **COPPOLA** (20) 28.12.03
82 Christian **CORRADI** (19) 21.02.05
87 Daniele **GHILARDI** (21) 06.01.03

MIDFIELDERS
6 Reda **BELAHYANE** (Fra) (20) 01.06.04
8 Darko **LAZOVIC** (Srb) (34) 15.09.90
17 Ayanda **SISHUBA** (Bel) (19) 02.02.05
18 Abdou **HARROUI** (Mar) (26) 13.01.98
20 Grigoris **KASTANOS** (Cyp) (26) 30.01.98
21 Dani **SILVA** (Por) (24) 11.04.00
25 Suat **SERDAR** (Ger) (27) 11.04.97
31 Tomas **SUSLOV** (Svk) (22) 07.06.02
33 Ondrej **DUDA** (Svk) (29) 05.12.94
80 Alphadjo **CISSE** (18) 22.10.06

FORWARDS
7 Mathis **LAMBOURDE** (Fra) (18) 09.01.06
9 Amin **SARR** (Swe) (23) 11.03.01
11 Casper **TENGSTEDT** (Den) (24) 01.06.00
13 Juan Manuel **CRUZ** (Arg) (25) 19.07.99
14 Dailon **LIVRAMENTO** (Cpv) (23) 04.05.01
29 Faride **ALIDOU** (Ger) (23) 18.07.01
35 Daniel **MOSQUERA** (Col) (25) 20.10.99
72 Junior **AJAYI** (Civ) (20) 11.10.04

COACH
Paolo **ZANETTI** (41) 16.12.82

(ages as of 22.11.24)

Internationals

2026 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

SOUTH AMERICA Section

● *6 direct slots available, plus 1 play-off slot*

Oct 10 – El Alto
Bolivia 1 (Terceros 58)
Colombia 0
Bolivia: Viscarra – Medina, Haquin, Suarez, Jose Sagredo; Matheus (Terrazas 80), H. Cuellar, R. Vaca; Terceros (Paz 68), Alganaraz (Miranda 80), Chura (Villamil 31).
Sent off: H. Cuellar 20.
Colombia: Vargas – S. Arias, Ditta, Lucumi, Borja; Uribe (Rios 46), Castano (Lerma 63); J. Arias (Asprilla 63), James, Diaz (Hernandez 78); Martinez (Cordoba 23).

Oct 10 – Quito
Ecuador 0
Paraguay 0
Ecuador: Galindez – Torres, Pacho, Hincapie; Preciado (Sarmiento 46), Franco, M. Caicedo, Estupinan (C. Ramirez 77); Plata (Campana 66), Valencia (Yeboah 77), Paez (Minda 46).
Paraguay: Fernandez – Balbuena, Gomez, Alderete; Caceres, Cubas, Bobadilla (Villasanti 76), Sandez (Arzamendia 83); Almiron (Romero 75), Arce (Pitta 67), Enciso (Sosa 67).

Oct 10 – Maturin
Venezuela 1 (Rondon 65)
Argentina 1 (Otamendi 13)
Venezuela: Romo – Gonzalez, Osorio, Ferraresi, Aramburu; Herrera, Rincon (Cadiz 59), Jose Martinez (Castillo 90+3); Savarino (Machis 59), Rondon, Soteldo.
Argentina: Rulli – Molina, Pezzella, Otamendi, Tagliafico; De Paul, Fernandez (Paredes 85), Lo Celso (Balerdi 68); Almada (Montiel 46); Alvarez (La. Martinez 85), Messi.

Oct 10 – Santiago
Chile 1 (Vargas 2)
Brazil 2 (Igor Jesus 45+1, Luiz Henrique 89)
Chile: Cortes – Loyola, Maripan, Kuscevic, Galdames (Morales 65); Pavez (Alarcon 76), Echeverria; Osorio, Valdes (Tapia 76), Davila (Cepeda 59); Vargas (Palacios 76).
Brazil: Ederson – Danilo, Marquinhos, Gabriel, Abner (Martinelli 85); Paqueta (Gerson 46), Andre (Guimaraes 46); Savinho (Luiz Henrique 68), Raphinha, Rodrygo; Igor Jesus (Endrick 76).

Oct 11 – Lima
Peru 1 (Mi. Araujo 88)
Uruguay 0
Peru: Gallese – Mi. Araujo, Zambrano, Abram; Polo, Sonne (Archimbaud 82), Castillo, Pena (Garces 90), Callens (Quispe 72); Valera (Ramos 82), Flores (Reyna 71).
Uruguay: Rochet – Varela, Ugarte, Bueno; Nandez (L. Rodriguez 90), Valverde, Fonseca, De Arrascaeta, Ma. Araujo; C. Olivera (Pellistri 46), Nunez.

Oct 15 – Barranquilla
Colombia 4 (Sanchez 34, Diaz 52, Duran 84, Sinisterra 90+3)
Chile 0
Colombia: Vargas – S. Arias, Sanchez, Lucumi, Mojica (Cabal 86); Rios, Lerma, J. Arias (Carrascal 77); James (Quintero 86), Cordoba (Duran 46), Diaz (Sinisterra 76).
Chile: Cortes – Loyola, Maripan, Kuscevic, Galdames (Morales 46); Echeverria (Guerrero 60), Pulgar (Ortegoza 84); Osorio, Valdes (Cepeda 61), Davila; Vargas (Tapia 60).

Oct 15 – Asuncion
Paraguay 2 (Sanabria 59, 74)
Venezuela 1 (Aramburu 25)
Paraguay: Fernandez – Caceres, Gomez, Alderete, Alonso; Cubas, Gomez (Bobadilla 80); Almiron, Enciso (Villasanti 88), Sosa (Romero 46); Pitta (Sanabria 46).
Venezuela: Romo – Aramburu, R. Ramirez, Ferraresi (J. Ramirez 88), Navarro; Herrera, Casseres Jr. (Segovia 80), Machis (Bello 79), Savarino (Cadiz 66), Soteldo; Rondon.

Oct 15 – Montevideo
Uruguay 0
Ecuador 0
Uruguay: Rochet – Nandez, Bueno, Gimenez, M. Olivera (Saracchi 87); Valverde, Ugarte (Fonseca 82); Pellistri, De Arrascaeta (De la Cruz 46), Araujo; Nunez.
Ecuador: Galindez – Preciado, Torres, Pacho, Hincapie, Estupinan (Chavez 90+3); Franco, M. Caicedo, Minda (Arroyo 80); Plata (Yeboah 90+3), Valencia (Rodriguez 59).

Oct 15 – Buenos Aires
Argentina 6 (Messi 19, 84, 86, La. Martinez 43, Alvarez 45+3, Almada 69)
Bolivia 0
Argentina: Rulli – Molina, Romero, Otamendi (Li. Martinez 73), Tagliafico; De Paul (Palacios 65), Fernandez, Mac Allister (Paredes 66); Messi, La. Martinez (N. Paz 73), Alvarez (Almada 65).
Bolivia: Viscarra – Medina, Haquin, Suarez, Jose Sagredo, Fernandez (L. Paz 67); Terceros (Chavez 67), Matheus (Terrazas 80), Villamil, R. Vaca; Alganaraz (Monteiro 79).

Oct 15 – Brasilia
Brazil 4 (Raphinha 38 pen, 54 pen, Andreas Pereira 71, Luiz Henrique 74)
Peru 0
Brazil: Ederson – Vanderson, Marquinhos, Gabriel, Abner; Gerson, Bruno Guimaraes (Andre 79); Savinho (Luiz Henrique 69), Raphinha (Matheus Pereira 78), Rodrygo (Andreas Pereira 69); Igor Jesus (Endrick 78).
Peru: Gallese – Araujo, Zambrano, Callens; Advincula (Polo 73), Cartagena, Castillo (Sonne 57), Pena (Murrugarra 78), Lopez; Reyna (Ramos 57), Flores (Grimaldo 73).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	10	7	1	2	19	5	22
Colombia	10	5	4	1	13	6	19
Uruguay	10	4	4	2	13	6	16
Brazil	10	5	1	4	15	9	16
Ecuador*	10	4	4	2	6	4	13
Paraguay	10	3	4	3	4	4	13
Bolivia	10	4	0	6	11	21	12
Venezuela	10	2	5	3	8	10	11
Peru	10	1	3	6	3	14	6
Chile	10	1	2	7	5	18	5

*Deducted 3 points

ASIA Section

● *8 direct slots available, plus 1 play-off slot*

Third Round

Group A

Oct 10 – Tashkent
Uzbekistan 0
Iran 0

Oct 10 – Doha
Qatar 3 (Ali 39, Kozubaev 63 og, Al Hassan 81)
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Shukurov 76)

Oct 10 – Al Ain
United Arab Emirates 1 (Al Ghassani 66)
North Korea 1 (Jong Il-gwan 86)

Oct 15 – Tashkent
Uzbekistan 1 (Shukurov 76 pen)
United Arab Emirates 0

Oct 15 – Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 1 (Brauzman 11)
North Korea 0

Oct 15 – Dubai
Iran 4 (Azmoun 42, 48, Mohebi 65, 90+8)
Qatar 1 (Ali 17)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Uzbekistan	4	3	1	0	5	2	10
UAE	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Qatar	4	1	1	2	7	10	4
Kyrgyzstan	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
North Korea	4	0	2	2	3	5	2

Group B

Oct 10 – Amman
Jordan 0
South Korea 2 (Lee Jae-sung 38, Oh Hyeon-gyu 68)

Oct 10 – Muscat
Oman 4 (Al Mushaifri 17, 58, Al Ghassani 30, Fawaz 79)
Kuwait 0

Oct 10 – Basra
Iraq 1 (Hussein 31)
Palestine 0

Oct 15 – Yongin
South Korea 3 (Oh Se-hun 41, Oh Hyeon-gyu 74, Lee Jae-sung 83)
Iraq 2 (Hussein 50, Bayesh 90+5)

Oct 15 – Amman
Jordan 4 (Al Naimat 26, 54, Olwan 49 pen, 87)
Oman 0

Oct 15 – Al Rayyan
Palestine 2 (Abou Ali 41 pen, Qunbar 90+3)
Kuwait 2 (Nasser 31 pen, 80)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Jordan	4	2	1	1	8	4	7
Iraq	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Oman	4	1	0	3	5	8	3
Kuwait	4	0	3	1	3	7	3
Palestine	4	0	2	2	3	6	2

Group C

Oct 10 – Adelaide
Australia 3 (Miller 45+2, Goodwin 53, Velupillay 90+2)
China 1 (Xie Wenneng 20)

Oct 10 – Riffa
Bahrain 2 (Marhoon 15, 90+9)
Indonesia 2 (Oratmangoen 45+3, Struick 74)

Oct 10 – Jeddah
Saudi Arabia 0
Japan 2 (Kamada 14, Ogawa 81)

Oct 15 – Saitama
Japan 1 (Burgess 76 og)
Australia 1 (Taniguchi 58 og)

Oct 15 – Qingdao
China 2 (Abduweli 21, Zhang Yuning 44)
Indonesia 1 (Haye 86)

Oct 15 – Jeddah
Saudi Arabia 0
Bahrain 0

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	4	3	1	0	15	1	10
Australia	4	1	2	1	4	3	5
Saudi Arabia	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Bahrain	4	1	2	1	3	7	5
Indonesia	4	0	3	1	4	5	3
China	4	1	0	3	4	13	3

OCEANIA Section

● *1 direct slot available, plus 1 play-off slot*

Second Round

Group A

Oct 10 – Suva
New Caledonia 3 (Athale 20 pen, Gope-Fenepej 45, Haewegene 83)
Papua New Guinea 1 (Semmy 78)

Oct 10 – Suva
Solomon Islands 0
Fiji 1 (Krishna 13)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Caledonia	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Fiji	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Solomon Islands	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Papua New Guinea	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

Group B

Oct 11 – Port Vila
New Zealand 3 (Just 2, Wood 67, Waine 89)
Tahiti 0

Oct 11 – Port Vila
Vanuatu 4 (Cooper 7, Alick 36, 57, Kalo 90+1)
Samoa 1 (Viliamu 55)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vanuatu	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
New Zealand	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Samoa	1	0	0	1	1	4	0
Tahiti	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

2024-25 UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Group A1

Oct 12 – Zagreb
Croatia 2 (Matanovic 36, Kramaric 70)
Scotland 1 (Christie 32)
Croatia: Livakovic – Sutalo, Caleta-Car, Gvardiol; Perisic (Jakic 90+1), Modric, Mario Pasalic (P. Sucic 46), Sosa; L. Sucic (Baturina 62), Kramaric (Petkovic 71); Matanovic (Budimir 71).
Scotland: Gordon – Ralston, Souttar, Hanley, Robertson; Gilmour, McLean; Doak (Gauld 77), McTominay, Christie; Dykes (Adams 77).

Oct 12 – Warsaw
Poland 1 (Zielinski 78)
Portugal 3 (B. Silva 26, Ronaldo 37, Bednarek 88 og)
Poland: Skorupski – Walukiewicz (Kiwior 46), Bednarek, Dawidowicz; Oyedele (Moder 66); Frankowski, S. Szymanski (Piatek 84), Zielinski, Zalewski (Ameyaw 76); Swiderski (Urbanski 76), Lewandowski.
Portugal: D. Costa – Dalot, Dias, Veiga, Mendes; R. Neves, B. Silva (S. Costa 90+1); Neto (Semedo 82), Fernandes (Otavio 90+1), Leao (Trincao 64); Ronaldo (Jota 63).

Oct 15 – Warsaw
Poland 3 (Zielinski 5, Zalewski 45, S. Szymanski 68)
Croatia 3 (Sosa 19, P. Sucic 24, Baturina 26)
Poland: Bulka – Dawidowicz (Piatkowski 38), Bednarek, Kiwior; Moder (Oyedele 62); Kaminski (Ameyaw 62), S. Szymanski, Zielinski (Kapustka 74), Zalewski; Swiderski (Lewandowski 62), Urbanski.
Croatia: Livakovic – Sutalo, Erlic (Labrovic 81), Gvardiol; Perisic, Modric, P. Sucic, Sosa; Baturina (L. Sucic 80), Matanovic (Budimir 61), Kramaric (Mario Pasalic 69). *Sent off: Livakovic 76.*

Oct 15 – Glasgow
Scotland 0
Portugal 0
Scotland: Gordon – Ralston (Devlin 89), Souttar, Hanley, Robertson; Gilmour, McLean; Christie (Gauld 68), McTominay, Doak (Morgan 67); Adams (Dykes 83).
Portugal: D. Costa – Cancelo (Semedo 88), A. Silva, Dias, Mendes; Vitinha (Felix 88), Palhinha (R. Neves 61), Fernandes; Conceicao (B. Silva 61), Ronaldo, Jota (Leao 61).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Croatia	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Poland	4	1	1	2	7	9	4
Scotland	4	0	1	3	4	7	1

Group A2

Oct 10 – Budapest
Israel 1 (Gandelman 24)
France 4 (Camavinga 6, Nkunku 28, Guendouzi 87, Barcola 89)
Israel: Glazer – Feingold, Nachmias, Baltaxa; Abada, Jaber (Gropper 76), Abu Fani (Azoulay 67), Haziza (Biton 76); Gandelman (Peretz 62), Baribo (Khalaili 62), Gloukh.
France: Maignan – Kounde, Konate, Saliba, T. Hernandez (Digne 90); Tchouameni (Zaire-Emery 90), Camavinga (Fofana 70); Dembele, Olise (Barcola 70), Nkunku (Guendouzi 77); Kolo Muani.

Oct 10 – Rome
Italy 2 (Cambiaso 1, Retegui 24)
Belgium 2 (De Cuyper 42, Trossard 61)
Italy: Donnarumma – Di Lorenzo, Bastoni, Calafiori; Cambiaso, Frattesi (Bellanova 90),

Ricci (Fagioli 70), Tonali (Pisilli 80), Dimarco (Udogie 70); Pellegrini; Retegui (Raspadori 80).
Sent off: Pellegrini 40.
Belgium: Casteels – Debast, Faes, Theate (Vranckx 69), De Cuyper; Tielemans, Mangala (Castagne 68); Doku (Fofana 87), De Ketelaere (Lukebakio 68), Trossard; Openda (Ngonge 87).

Oct 14 – Brussels
Belgium 1 (Openda 45+3)
France 2 (Kolo Muani 35 pen, 62)
Belgium: Casteels – Debast, Faes, Theate, Castagne (De Cuyper 67); Mangala (Vranckx 67); Doku, De Ketelaere (Engels 81), Tielemans (Lukebakio 82), Trossard; Openda.
France: Maignan – Kounde, Konate, Saliba, Digne; Kone, Tchouameni, Guendouzi (Camavinga 74); Dembele (Fofana 79), Kolo Muani (Thuram 90+3), Barcola (Nkunku 74).
Sent off: Tchouameni 76.

Oct 14 – Udine
Italy 4 (Retegui 41 pen, Di Lorenzo 54, 79, Frattesi 72)
Israel 1 (Abu Fani 66)
Italy: Vicario – Di Lorenzo, Bastoni, Calafiori; Cambiaso, Frattesi (Buongiorno 87), Fagioli (Ricci 46), Tonali, Dimarco (Udogie 73); Raspadori (Maldini 74); Retegui (Lucca 84).
Israel: Glazer – Feingold, Nachimas, Baltaxa; Abada (Baribo 75), Abu Fani, Kanichowsky (Jaber 46), Haziza (Gropper 64); Peretz (Safouri 81), Madmon (Khalaili 64), Gloukh.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	4	3	1	0	11	5	10
France	4	3	0	1	9	5	9
Belgium	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Israel	4	0	0	4	4	13	0

Group A3

Oct 11 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 1 (Dzeko 70)
Germany 2 (Undav 30, 36)
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Vasilj – Gazibegovic, Barisic, Katic, Kolasinac (Tabakovic 90+1), Burnic (Bajraktarevic 84); Gigovic (Saric 66), Basic (Tahirovic 46), Huseinbasic (Hajradinovic 65); Dzeko, Demirovic.
Germany: Nubel – Kimmich, Rudiger, Tah, Mittelstadt (Gosens 66); Andrich (Stiller 67), Gross (Anton 90+1); Gnabry (Fuhrich 82), Undav (Burkardt 67), Wirtz; Kleindienst.

Oct 11 – Budapest
Hungary 1 (Sallai 32)
Netherlands 1 (Dumfries 83)
Hungary: Dibusz – Fiola, Orban, Dardai (Botka 46); Bolla (Gera 89), Nikitscher, Schafer, Z. Nagy; Sallai (Csoboth 65), Szoboszlai; Varga (A. Nagy 79).
Netherlands: Verbruggen – Dumfries, De Vrij (Malen 75), Van Dijk, Van de Ven; Gravenberch, Reijnders, Q. Timber (Til 75); Simons (De Ligt 81), Zirkzee (Brobbey 76), Gakpo (Hato 89).
Sent off: Van Dijk 79.

Oct 14 – Zenica
Bosnia & Herzegovina 0
Hungary 2 (Szboszlai 38, 50 pen)
Bosnia & Herzegovina: Vasilj – Gazibegovic (Omerovic 46), Katic, Bicakcic, Kolasinac; Gigovic (Huseinbasic 65), Tahirovic (Saric 79); Bajraktarevic, Hajradinovic (Basic 79), Burnic (Tabakovic 65); Dzeko.
Hungary: Dibusz – Botka, Orban, Fiola; Bolla (Gera 68), Nikitscher, Schafer (A. Nagy 86), Z. Nagy (Szucs 87); Sallai (Gazdag 68), Szoboszlai; Varga (Adam 78).

Oct 14 – Munich
Germany 1 (Leweling 64)
Netherlands 0
Germany: Baumann – Kimmich, Rudiger, Schlotterbeck, Mittelstadt; Stiller (Anton 82), Pavlovic (Schade 77); Gnabry, Wirtz (Andrich 46), Leweling (Gosens 87); Kleindienst (Burkardt 82).
Netherlands: Verbruggen – Dumfries, De Vrij, Van de Ven, Hato; Gravenberch (Geertruida 80), Q. Timber (Wieffer 46); Simons, Reijnders (Malen 46), Gakpo (Frimpong 65); Brobbey (Zirkzee 75).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Netherlands	4	1	2	1	8	6	5
Hungary	4	1	2	1	3	6	5
Bosnia & Herz	4	0	1	3	3	9	1

Group A4

Oct 12 – Leskovac
Serbia 2 (Elvedi 45+1 og, A. Mitrovic 61)
Switzerland 0
Serbia: Rajkovic – Erakovic, Milenkovic, Pavlovic; Nedeljkovic (Simic 73), N. Maksimovic, Grujic (Jovic 46), Birmancevic (Cumic 88); Samardzic, Lukic (Zdjelar 53); A. Mitrovic (A. Maksimovic 74).
Switzerland: Kobel – Elvedi, Akanji, Rodriguez (Garcia 70); Widmer (Rieder 46), Freuler, Xhaka, Aebischer (Fernandes 70); Amdouni (Zeqiri 70), Embolo (Monteiro 86), Ndoye.

Oct 12 – Murcia
Spain 1 (Zubimendi 79)
Denmark 0
Spain: Raya – Porro, Vivian, Laporte, Grimaldo; Zubimendi, Fabian; Yamal (Gomez 90+3), Pedri (Merino 62), Oyarzabal (Baena 62); Morata (Joselu 78).
Denmark: Schmeichel – Kristensen, Vestergaard, Nelsson; Bah, Hjulmand, Hojbjerg, Kristiansen; Eriksen (Isaksen 73), Dolberg (Poulsen 73). Gronbaek (Hojlund 78).

Oct 15 – Cordoba
Spain 3 (Laporte 5, Morata 65, Baena 77)
Serbia 0
Spain: Raya – Porro, Vivian (Cubarsi 82), Laporte, Cucurella; Zubimendi, Fabian (Garcia 82); Oyarzabal, Merino (Pedri 65), Baena (Zaragoza 78); Morata (Joselu 78).
Serbia: Rajkovic – Nedeljkovic (Cumic 64), Erakovic, Milenkovic, Pavlovic, Birmancevic; Samardzic (Grujic 46), N. Maksimovic, Zdjelar (A. Maksimovic 64); A. Mitrovic (Simic 79), Joveljic (Jovic 46). *Sent off: Pavlovic 76.*

Oct 15 – St Gallen
Switzerland 2 (Freuler 26, Amdouni 45+1 pen)
Denmark 2 (Isaksen 27, Eriksen 69)
Switzerland: Kobel – Fernandes, Akanji, Elvedi, Garcia; Freuler (Aebischer 81), Xhaka; Amdouni (Witzig 89), Rieder (Ugrinic 67), Ndoye (Sierro 89); Embolo (Zeqiri 81).
Denmark: Schmeichel – Kristensen, Vestergaard, Nelsson (Dolberg 76); Bah, Eriksen, Hojbjerg, Dorgu (Maehle 86); Isaksen (Stage 57), Hojlund (Skov Olsen 57), Gronbaek (Wind 57).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	4	3	1	0	8	1	10
Denmark	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Serbia	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Switzerland	4	0	1	3	3	10	1

Group B1

Oct 11 – Prague
Czech Republic 2 (Chory 3, 63)
Albania 0
Czech Republic: Kovar – Coufal, Vitik, Holes, Boril; Soucek, Cerv (Kral 90+2); Cerny (Hlozek 69), Sulc (Cvancara 90+2), Provod (Lingr 88); Chory (Kuchta 87).
Albania: Strakosha – Hysaj, Ismajli, Kumbulla, Mitaj; Laci (Seferi 79), Ramadani; Asani (Hoxha 65), Asllani, Bajrami (Muci 88); Daku (Tuci 65).

Oct 11 – Poznan
Ukraine 1 (Mudryk 35)
Georgia 0
Ukraine: Trubin – Konoplya, Zabarnyi, Talovierov, Matviyenko; Kaliuzhnyi (Kryskiv 90+1); Hutsuliak (Zubkov 75), Shaparenko, Sudakov (Svatok 90+1), Mudryk (Nazarenko 86); Dovbyk (Yaremchuk 75).
Georgia: Mamardashvili – Gvelesiani (Zivzivadze 82), Kashia, Dvali; Kakabadze, Kochorashvili (Davitashvili 71), Kiteishvili, Chakvetadze, Lochoshvili (Shengelia 60); Mikautadze, Kvaratskhelia.

Oct 14 – Tbilisi
Georgia 0
Albania 1 (Asllani 48)
Georgia: Mamardashvili – Kakabadze, Kashia, Dvali, Lochoshvili (Tsitaishvili 81); Davitashvili (Shengelia 90+5), Kiteishvili, Chakvetadze; Mikautadze, Zivzivadze, Kvaratskhelia.
Albania: Strakosha – Balliu, Ismajli, Ajeti, Mitaj; Ramadani, Asllani; Asani, Laci, Bajrami (Seferi 77); Tuci (Daku 66).

Oct 14 – Wroclaw
Ukraine 1 (Dovbyk 52 pen)
Czech Republic 1 (Cerv 18)
Ukraine: Trubin – Konoplya (Tymchyk 80), Zabarnyi, Talovierov, Matviyenko; Stepanenko (Kaliuzhnyi 64); Hutsuliak (Zubkov 22), Shaparenko (Kryskiv 64), Sudakov, Mudryk; Dovbyk (Yaremchuk 80).
Czech Republic: Kovar – Coufal, Vitik, Krejci, Boril (Zmrzly 70); Cerv, Soucek; Cerny (Lingr 58), Sulc (Kutchta 90+1), Provod (Hlozek 58); Chory (Kliment 70).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	4	2	1	1	7	7	7
Georgia	4	2	0	2	5	3	6
Albania	4	2	0	2	3	4	6
Ukraine	4	1	1	2	5	6	4

Group B2

Oct 10 – Wembley
England 1 (Bellingham 87)
Greece 2 (Pavlidis 49, 90+4)
England: Pickford – Alexander-Arnold, Stones, Colwill, Lewis; Saka (Madueke 51), Palmer, Rice, Gordon (Watkins 60); Foden (Solanke 72), Bellingham.
Greece: Vlachodimos – Rota, Mavropanos, Koulierakis, Giannoulis; Kourbelis (Mantalos 74), Siopis (Zafeiris 66); Masouras (Pelkas 66), Bakasetas (Vagiannidis 86), Tzolis (Konstantelias 86); Pavlidis.

Oct 10 – Helsinki
Finland 1 (Pohjanpalo 17)
Republic of Ireland 2 (Scales 57, Brady 88)
Finland: Hradecky – Stahl, Hoskonen, Ivanov, Galvez; Walta (Pukki 78), Schuller (Antman 65); Lod, Kamara, Keskinen (Peltola 65); Pohjanpalo (Kallman 78).
Republic of Ireland: Kelleher – O'Shea, Collins, Scales, Brady; Cullen, Knight; Ogbene (Ebosele 80), Azaz (McGrath 71), Szmodics (Idah 80); Ferguson (Parrott 71).

Oct 13 – Helsinki
Finland 1 (Hoskonen 87)
England 3 (Grealish 18, Alexander-Arnold 74, Rice 84)
Finland: Hradecky – Alho (Antman 82), Hoskonen, Ivanov, Peltola, Uronen; Jensen (Lod 75), Kamara, Schuller (Walta 63), Keskinen (Pukki 75); Kallman (Pohjanpalo 63).
England: Henderson – Walker, Stones, Guehi, Alexander-Arnold; Rice (Gallagher 85), Gomes (Lewis 80); Palmer (Madueke 69), Bellingham (Foden 80), Grealish; Kane (Watkins 69).

Oct 13 – Piraeus
Greece 2 (Bakasetas 48, Mantalos 90+1)
Republic of Ireland 0
Greece: Vlachodimos – Rota, Mavropanos, Hatzidiakos, Giannoulis; Kourbelis (Tsimikas 82), Siopis; Masouras (Pelkas 65), Bakasetas (Zafeiris 72), Tzolis (Mantalos 82); Pavlidis (Douvikas 72).
Rep of Ireland: Kelleher – O'Shea (McAteer 82), Collins, Scales, Brady; Ogbene (Ebosele 57), Cullen, Knight (Molumby 72), Szmodics (Johnston 72); Ferguson (Taylor 57), Parrott.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	4	4	0	0	9	1	12
England	4	3	0	1	8	3	9
Rep of Ireland	4	1	0	3	2	7	3
Finland	4	0	0	4	2	10	0

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Group B3

Oct 10 – Linz
Austria 4 (Baumgartner 10, Lienhart 53, Sabitzer 56, Seidl 79)
Kazakhstan 0
Austria: A. Schlager – Posch, Trauner (Svoboda 62), Lienhart, Prass; Seiwald, Laimer (Grillitsch 76); Schmid (Wimmer 62), Baumgartner (Seidl 72), Sabitzer; Adamu (Arnautovic 62).
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Astanov, Kasym, Alip, Vorogovskiy; Zaynutdinov (Zhaksybayev 76), Tagybergen (Darabayev 67), Abiken (Orazov 46), Chesnokov; Islamhkan (Samorodov 46), Zhaksylykov (Shushenachev 59).

Oct 10 – Oslo
Norway 3 (Haaland 7, 62, Sorloth 52)
Slovenia 0
Norway: Nyland – Ajer, Hanche-Olsen, Ostigard (Pedersen 46), Moller Wolfe; Ryerson (Vetlesen 82), Berge, Thorsby (Berg 75), Nusa (Donnum 76); Sorloth (Strand Larsen 76), Haaland.
Slovenia: Oblak – Janza, Drkusic, Bijol, Balkovec (Vipotnik 57); Stojanovic, Cerin (Ilicic 79), Elsnik, Petrovic (Kurtic 73); Sporar (Celar 57), Sesko (Kramer 79).

Oct 13 – Linz
Austria 5 (Arnautovic 8, 49 pen, Lienhart 58, Posch 62, Gregoritsch 71)
Norway 1 (Sorloth 39)
Austria: Pentz – Posch, Trauner (Svoboda 79), Lienhart, Mwene; Seiwald, Laimer (Grillitsch 84); Schmid (Wimmer 79), Baumgartner (Seidl 84), Sabitzer; Arnautovic (Gregoritsch 69).
Norway: Nyland – Pedersen, Ajer, Hanche-Olsen, Moller Wolfe (Heggem 79); Ryerson (Berg 63), Berge, Thorsby (Donnum 64), Nusa (Myhre 64); Sorloth (Strand Larsen 84), Haaland.

Oct 13 – Almaty
Kazakhstan 0
Slovenia 1 (Mlakar 55)
Kazakhstan: Shatskiy – Bystrov, Marochkin, Alip, Vorogovskiy; Tagybergen (Skvortsov 69), Darabayev (Payruz 78); Zaynutdinov, Islamkhan, Chesnokov (Baltabekov 64); Aymbetov (Zhaksylykov 64).
Slovenia: Oblak – Stojanovic, Drkusic (Bajric 47), Bijol, Janza; Ilicic (Petrovic 72), Cerin, Elsnik, Mlakar (Kurtic 87); Sporar (Vipotnik 71), Sesko.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norway	4	2	1	1	6	6	7
Austria	4	2	1	1	11	4	7
Slovenia	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Kazakhstan	4	0	1	3	0	8	1

Group B4

Oct 11 – Reykjavik
Iceland 2 (Tomasson 69, Ward 72 og)
Wales 2 (Johnson 11, Wilson 29)
Iceland: Valdimarsson – Lunddal Fridriksson, Ingason, Gretarsson, Finnsson (Tomasson 46); W. Willumsson (Ellertsson 46), Gudmundsson (Traustason 82), Thordarson, Thorsteinsson; Oskarsson, Gudjohnsen (G. Sigurdsson 84).
Wales: Ward – Roberts (Cullen 76), Rodon, B. Davies, Williams; J. James, Cooper; Johnson (Burns 46), Wilson, Thomas (Cabango 76); Moore.

Oct 11 – Samsun
Turkey 1 (Kahveci 69)
Montenegro 0
Turkey: Cakir – Muldur (Celik 62), Demiral, Bardakci, Kadioglu; Calhanoglu, Kokcu; Akgun (Kahveci 63), Guler (Ayhan 83) Akturkoglu (Yildiz 69); Yilmaz (Yildirim 46).
Montenegro: Nikic – Marusic, Vujacic, Sipcic, Vukcevic; Camaj (Osmajic 61), Bakic (Vukotic 90+1), Kuc (Jankovic 61), Jovovic (Brnovic 76), Krstovic; Jovetic (Mugosa 76).

Oct 14 – Cardiff
Wales 1 (Wilson 36 pen)
Montenegro 0
Wales: Darlow – Williams, Rodon, Cabango, B. Davies; Wilson (Broadhead 69), Sheehan; Brooks (Allen 59), Cullen (Cooper 89), Burns (Thomas 69); Harris (Moore 89).
Montenegro: Nikic – Marusic (M. Vukcevic 46), Vujacic, Sipcic, A. Vukcevic (Radunovic 46); Jankovic (Kuc 82), Bakic; Camaj (Radulovic 46), Jovovic, Krstovic; Mugosa (Jovetic 46).

Oct 14 – Reykjavik
Iceland 2 (Oskarsson 3, Gudjohnsen 83)
Turkey 4 (Kaveci 62, Calhanoglu 67 pen, Guler 88, Akturkoglu 90+5)
Iceland: Valdimarsson – Lunddal Fridriksson, Ingason, Gretarsson, Tomasson; Anderson (Johannesson 68), Traustason, Gudmundsson, Ellertsson (W. Willumsson 78); Oskarsson, Gudjohnsen.
Turkey: Cakir – Celik, Demiral, Bardakci, Kadioglu (Elmali 78); Kokcu (Akaydin 90), Calhanoglu; Kahveci (Akgun 78), Guler (Yokuslu 89), Yildiz (Yildirim 90+3); Akturkoglu.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkey	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Wales	4	2	2	0	5	3	8
Iceland	4	1	1	2	7	9	4
Montenegro	4	0	0	4	1	6	0

Group C1

Oct 11 – Bratislava
Slovakia 2 (Strelec 44, 72)
Sweden 2 (Ayari 25, Sema 32)
Slovakia: Rodak – Pekarik (Gyomber 90), Vavro, Skriniar, Hancko; Duda (Bero 76), Lobotka, Benes; Suslov (Duris 90), Strelec (Bozenik 80), Haraslin (Tupta 90).
Sweden: Johansson – Douglas (Lindelof 62), Hien, Gudmundsson; Eliasson (Krafth 90+2), Karlstrom, Saletros, Sema; Ayari (Larsson 62); Kulusevski, Gyokeres.

Oct 11 – Tallinn
Estonia 3 (Yakovlev 32, Sinyavskiy 45+2, Shein 71)
Azerbaijan 1 (Bayramov 45+1 pen)
Estonia: Hein – Paskotsi (Peetson 29), J. Tamm, Mets, Schjonning-Larsen; Ainsalu, Kait (Poom 84); Yakovlev (Zenjov 68), Shein (Vetkal 84), Sinyavskiy; Anier (Sorga 68).
Azerbaijan: Dzhenetov – Mammadov, B. Huseynov, Kryvotsyuk; A. Huseynov (Aliyev 77), Diniyev (Nuriyev 64), Isayev (Mahmudov 76), Cafarguliyev; Bayramov (Emreli 64), Dadashov (R. Akhmedzade 82), Seydayev.

Oct 14 – Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Bayramov 38)
Slovakia 3 (Mammadov 15 og, Haraslin 75, Duris 86)
Azerbaijan: Dzhenetov – Mammadov, B. Huseynov, Kryvotsyuk (Mahmudov 46); Aliyev (A. Huseynov 84), Nuriyev (Abdullayev 88), Isayev (Dadashov 77), Cafarguliyev; Bayramov, Emreli, Seydayev (R. Akhmedzade 77).
Sent off: Emreli 70.
Slovakia: Rodak – Pekarik (Tomic 90), Satka, Skriniar, Hancko; Duda (Rigo 90), Lobotka (Hrosovsky 84), Benes; Suslov, Strelec (Tupta 84), Haraslin (Duris 83).

Oct 14 – Tallinn
Estonia 0
Sweden 3 (Nanasi 29, 37, Gyokeres 66)
Estonia: Hein – Peetson (Kuusk 83), J. Tamm, Mets, Schjonning-Larsen; Ainsalu (Palumets 65), Kait; Yakovlev (Miller 54), Vetkal (Kristal 65), Sinyavskiy; A. Tamm (Anier 83).
Sweden: Johansson – Douglas (Eliasson 26), Hien, Gudmundsson; Krafth, Ayari (Svensson 89), Saletros (Larsson 83), Nanasi (Bolin 83), Sema; Gyokeres, Kulusevski.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	4	3	1	0	11	3	10
Slovakia	4	3	1	0	8	3	10
Estonia	4	1	0	3	3	8	3
Azerbaijan	4	0	0	4	3	11	0

Group C2

Oct 12 – Kaunas
Lithuania 1 (Golubickas 84)
Kosovo 2 (Zhegrova 20, E. Krasniqi 65)
Lithuania: Germontas – Sirvys, Kazukolovas, Girdvainis, Tutyskinas; Vorobjovas (Golubickas 59), Gineitis; Dolznikov (Paulauskas 77), Slivka, Lasickas (Cernych 59); Kucys (Matulevicius 78).
Kosovo: Saipi – Vojvoda, Am. Rrahmani, Dellova, Rrudhani (Hadergjonaj 59); Rexhbecaj, Berisha (I. Krasniqi 75); Zhegrova, Muslija (E. Krasniqi 59), Rashica (Jashari 88); Al. Rrahmani (Asllani 88).

Oct 12 – Larnaca
Cyprus 0
Romania 3 (Man 16, R. Marin 25 pen, Dragusin 36)
Cyprus: Mall – Antoniou (Stylianou 33), Laifis, Panagiotou, Ioannou; Artymatas, Kousoulos (Charalampous 46); Loizou (Sotiriou 46), Kastanos (Makris 75), Tzionis (Ilia 46); Pittas.
Romania: Nita – Ratiu, Dragusin (Ghita 82), Burca, Bancu (Chipciu 63); R. Marin (Olaru 63), M. Marin, Stanciu; Man (Hagi 72), Dragus (Puscas 72), Mihaila.

Oct 15 – Pristhina
Kosovo 3 (Am. Rrahmani 30, E. Krasniqi 52, Sahiti 70)
Cyprus 0
Kosovo: Muric – Vojvoda, Am. Rrahmani (Aliti 77), Dellova, Rrudhani; Emerllahu, Jashari; Zhegrova (Sahiti 67), Rashica (Muslija 16), E. Krasniqi; Al. Rrahmani (Asllani 78).
Cyprus: Demetriou – Karo (Antoniou 72), Andreou, Laifis, Ioannou (Pileas 46); Artymatas; Loizou, Kastanos (Mamas 72), Charalampous, Makris (Tzionis 72); Pittas (Sotiriou 77).

Oct 15 – Kaunas
Lithuania 1 (Kucys 7 pen)
Romania 2 (R. Marin 18 pen, Dragus 65)
Lithuania: Gertmonas – Sirvys (Cernych 75), Lekiatas, Girdvainis, Tutyskinas (Milasius 60); Vorobjovas (Matulevicius 80), Gineitis; Slivka, Golubickas (Dolznikov 59), Lasickas; Kucys (Paulauskas 80).
Romania: Nita – Ratiu, Dragusin, Burca, Sorescu; R. Marin (Olaru 73), M. Marin, Stanciu; Man (Hagi 84), Dragus, Mihaila (Coman 73).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	4	4	0	0	11	2	12
Kosovo	4	3	0	1	9	4	9
Cyprus	4	1	0	3	1	10	3
Lithuania	4	0	0	4	3	8	0

Group C3

Oct 12 – Plovdiv
Bulgaria 0
Luxembourg 0
Bulgaria: Mitov – Popov, Atanasov, Petkov, Nurnberger; Kostadinov (Chochev 83), Antov (Dimitrov 63); Despodov, Krastev, Kirilov (G. Minchev 63); Kolev (M. Minchev 76).
Luxembourg: Moris – Jans, Korac, Carlson (M. Martins 90); C. Martins; Bohnert, Barreiro, Olesen, Pinto (D'Anzico 61); Sinani, Curci (Rodrigues 46).

Oct 12 – Zalaegerszeg
Belarus 0
Northern Ireland 0
Belarus: Lapoukhov – Volkov, Politevich, Zabelin; Kovalev (Karpovich 64), Yablonskiy (Klimovich 75). Ebong, Pechenin; Antilevskiy (Kontsevoy 75), Korzun (Bocherov 90); Shikavka (Barkovskiy 64).
Northern Ireland: P. Charles – Hume, McNair, Toal; Bradley, Price (Smyth 83), S. Charles, Saville (McCann 83), Lewis (Spencer 67); Reid (Bonis 76), Marshall (D. Charles 67).

Oct 15 – Zalaegerszeg
Belarus 1 (Politevich 54)
Luxembourg 1 (Rodrigues 78 pen)
Belarus: Lapoukhov – Pigas (Kovalev 89), Martynovich, Politevich, Zabelin, Pechenin; Gromyko (Korzun 61), Bocherov, Ebong (Klimovich 74); Barkovskiy (Antilevskiy 74), Shikavka (Kontesevoy 89).
Luxembourg: Moris – D'Anzico (M. Martins 46), Korac, Carlson; Jans, Olesen (Moreira 76), Barreiro, Pinto; Curci (Omosanya 63), Sinani, Rodrigues.

Oct 15 – Belfast
Northern Ireland 5 (Price 15, 29, 81, Mitov 32 og, Magennis 89)
Bulgaria 0
Northern Ireland: P. Charles – Hume, McNair, Toal (Brown 45); Bradley, McCann, S. Charles (Magennis 85), Spencer; Price (Lyons 85), D. Charles (Reid 74), Marshall (Smyth 74).
Bulgaria: Mitov – Popov, Atanasov (Chochev 79), S. Petrov, H. Petrov; Krastev, Kostadinov, Yusein (Antov 46); Despodov (Iliev 85), M. Minchev (G. Minchev 85), Kirilov (Dimitrov 46).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N. Ireland	4	2	1	1	7	1	7
Belarus	4	1	3	0	2	1	6
Bulgaria	4	1	2	1	1	5	5
Luxembourg	4	0	2	2	1	4	2

Group C4

Oct 10 – Riga
Latvia 0
North Macedonia 3 (Astanov 35, Qamili 70, Elmas 90+3)
Latvia: Matrevics – Jurkovskis, Balodis, Tobers, Jagodinskis (Uldrikis 71), Ciganiks; Zelenkovs (Daskevics 82), Saveljevs (Vapne 82), Varslavans; Ikaunieks, Gutkovskis (Sits 17).
North Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Babunski (Ristovski 66), Manev, Musliu (Kostadinov 55), Alioski (Qamili 66); Alimi; Ashkovski (Dimoski 55), Atanasov, Bardhi, Elmas; Miovski (Velkovski 85).

Oct 10 – Torshavn
Faroe Islands 2 (Benjaminsen 37, Bjartalid 85)
Armenia 2 (Zelarayan 44, Manvelyan 90+3)
Faroe Islands: a Reynatrod – Benjaminsen, Faero, A. Edmundsson, Davidsen; S. Vatnhamar (Hendriksson 61), G. Vatnhamar, Sorensen (Joensen 82); Agnarsson (Bjartalid 62), J. Edmundsson (Knudsen 61), M. Olsen (Justinussen 70).
Armenia: Cancarevic – Hovhannisyan, Muradyan, Haroyan, G. Harutyunyan, Tiknizyan; Bichakhchyan (Manvelyan 86), Iwu, H. Harutyunyan (Sevikyan 67); Zelarayan, Ranos (Miranyan 67).

Oct 13 – Torshavn
Faroe Islands 1 (Sorensen 40)
Latvia 1 (Sits 69)
Faroe Islands: a Reynatrod – Benjaminsen, Faero (Nattestad 78), A. Edmundsson, Davidsen; G. Vatnhamar; Joensen (Bjartalid 57), Sorensen, Hendriksson (S. Vatnhamar 58), Agnarsson (Justinussen 58); M. Olsen (J. Edmundsson 83).
Latvia: Matrevics – Jurkovskis, Tobers, Balodis; Savalnieks (Cernomordijs 46), Zelenkovs, Saveljevs (Vapne 66), Varslavans (Melniks 90+1), Ciganiks; Ikaunieks (Sits 66), Uldrikis.

Oct 13 – Yerevan
Armenia 0
North Macedonia 2 (Miovski 72, Alimi 85)
Armenia: Cancarevic – Muradyan (Manvelyan 80), Haroyan, Calisir (G. Harutyunyan 65); Hovhannisyan (Dashyan 74), Bichakhchyan (Sevikyan 74), Iwu, Spertsyan, Tiknizyan; Zelarayan; Miranyan (Ranos 65).
N. Macedonia: Dimitrievski – Manev (Velkovski 54), Serafimov, Zajkov; Dimoski (Qamili 54), Alimi, Atanasov (Kostadinov 54), Alioski; Miovski (Ristovski 79), Bardhi (Ashkovski 87), Elmas.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
N. Macedonia	4	3	1	0	8	1	10
Armenia	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Latvia	4	1	1	2	3	8	4
Faroe Islands	4	0	3	1	4	5	3

Group D1

Oct 10 – Gibraltar
Gibraltar 1 (Britto 62)
San Marino 0
Gibraltar: Banda – Jolley (Pozo 90+3), Lopes, Annesley, Olivero; Scanlon (Ronan 77), Torrilla, Bent, Britto; Walker; De Barr (Bartolo 88).
San Marino: Colombo – G. Benvenuti (Fabbri 81), Cevoli, Rossi (Valentini 28), Tosi (T. Benvenuti 81); Mi. Battistini; Contadini, Casadei, Zannoni (Lazzari 70), Berardi (Sensoli 69); Nanni.

Oct 13 – Vaduz
Liechtenstein 0
Gibraltar 0
Liechtenstein: B. Buchel – Marxer, Traber, Goppel; Hasler, Luchinger (Kranz 90+1), M. Buchel (F. Wolfinger 83), Sele (S. Wolfinger 64), Kindle (Meier 64); Saglam, Salanovic (Notaro 46).
Gibraltar: Banda – Jolley, Lopes, Annesley, Olivero; Scanlon, Pozo, Bent, Ronan (Casciaro 90); Walker; De Barr (Bartolo 90).
Sent off: Bent 90+2.

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gibraltar	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
San Marino	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Liechtenstein	3	0	2	1	2	3	2

Group D2

Oct 10 – Chisinau
Moldova 2 (Ionita 31, Cojocaru 90+5)
Andorra 0
Moldova: Celeadnic – Platica, Craciun, Mudrac, Baboglo, Reabciuk; Caimacov (Stina 71), Motpan (Marandici 58), Rata (Mandrecenco 82), Ionita (Cojocaru 71); Damascan (Postolachi 57).
Andorra: Alvarez – San Nicolas, Llovera, C. Garcia, Olivera, M. Garcia (Sanchez 61); Martinez (Cucu 61), Teixeira (E. Vales 71), M. Vales (Pujol 84), Cervos; Berto.

Oct 13 – Ta'Qali
Malta 1 (Teuma 87 pen)
Moldova 0
Malta: Bonello – Shaw (Tabone 90+2), Mentz (Muscat 90+2), Borg; J. Mbong, Guillaumier, Teuma, Camenzuli; Buhagiar (Tuma 46), P. Mbong (Satariano 71); Montebello (Reid 46).
Moldova: Celeadnic – Platica, Craciun, Mudrac, Marandici (Cojocaru 46), Reabciuk; Caimacov, Baboglo, Rata (Postolachi 88), Ionita (Stina 77); Damascan (Mandricenco 56).

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Moldova	3	2	0	1	4	1	6
Malta	3	2	0	1	2	2	6
Andorra	2	0	0	2	0	3	0

2024-25 CONCACAF NATIONS LEAGUE

Group A1

Oct 11 – Le Gosier
Guadeloupe 0
Martinique 1 (Labeau 86)

Oct 11 – Paramaribo
Suriname 1 (Vlijter 34)
Costa Rica 1 (Alcocer 12)

Oct 11 – Leonora
Guyana 1 (Duke-McKenna 31)
Guatemala 3 (Santis 17, 68, Castellanos 61)

Oct 15 – San Jose
Costa Rica 3 (Madrigal 9, Vargas 38, Calvo 72)
Guatemala 0

Oct 15 – Le Gosier
Martinique 0
Guadeloupe 0

Oct 15 – Paramaribo
Suriname 5 (Becker 3, 10, Misidjan 33, Jubitana 51, Haps 69)
Guyana 1 (J. Jones 13)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Costa Rica*	4	2	2	0	7	1	8
Suriname*	4	2	1	1	9	4	7
Guatemala	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Martinique	4	1	2	1	4	5	5
Guadeloupe** (R)	4	1	1	2	1	4	4
Guyana** (R)	4	0	1	3	5	13	1

**Advance to quarter-finals*
***Enter 2025 CONCACAF Gold Cup play-ins*

Group A2

Oct 10 – Sinnamary
French Guiana 2 (Galas 56, Haabo 90+4)
Honduras 3 (Lozano 45+1, Flores 67, Benguche 74)

Oct 10 – Santiago de Cuba
Cuba 2 (Rodriguez 64, Casanova 75)
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (Bateau 8, J. Jones 70)

Oct 10 – Managua
Nicaragua 0
Jamaica 2 (Quijano 32 og, Williams 69)

Oct 14 – Kingston
Jamaica 0
Honduras 0

Oct 14 – Bacolet
Trinidad & Tob 3 (Gilbert 13, J. Jones 28, Gill 65)
Cuba 1 (Matos 62)

Oct 14 – Managua
Nicaragua 3 (Moreno 54, Barrera 79, Fletes 84)
French Guiana 2 (Baal 16, Haabo 62)

Final Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica*	4	2	2	0	4	1	8
Honduras*	4	2	1	1	8	4	7
Nicaragua	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Trinidad & Tob	4	1	2	1	5	7	5
Cuba** (R)	4	0	3	1	4	6	3
French Guiana** (R)	4	0	1	3	4	7	1

**Advance to quarter-finals*
***Enter 2025 CONCACAF Gold Cup play-ins*

Group B1

Oct 10 – Kingstown
Bonaire 0
Montserrat 1 (Taylor 49 pen)

Oct 10 – Kingstown
St Vincent & Grenadines 2 (John 43, Adams 63)
El Salvador 3 (Vasquez 20, Ortiz 70, Castillo 87)

Oct 13 – Kingstown
Montserrat 0
Bonaire 1 (Cicilia 29)

Oct 13 – Kingstown
El Salvador 1 (Clavel 71)
St Vincent & Grenadines 2 (Adams 39, Spring 88)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Salvador	4	3	0	1	10	6	9
St Vincent & Gren	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Bonaire	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Montserrat	4	1	0	3	7	7	3

Group B2

Oct 11 – Gros Islet
Grenada 0
Curacao 0

Oct 11 – Gros Islet
Saint Martin 1 (Raga 30)
Saint Lucia 2 (Elva 76, 90)

Oct 14 – Gros Islet
Curacao 1 (J. Bacuna 30)
Grenada 0

Oct 14 – Gros Islet
Saint Lucia 0
Saint Martin 4 (Lebon 8 pen, 45+2, Barakat 26, Arne 62)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saint Lucia	4	3	0	1	6	7	9
Curacao	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
Grenada	4	1	1	2	3	3	4
Saint Martin	4	1	0	3	5	8	3

Group B3

Oct 11 – Oranjestad
Sint Maarten 3 (Amatkarijo 44, 85 pen, Kort 49)
Puerto Rico 2 (Sulia 2, A. Diaz 90+5)

Oct 11 – Oranjestad
Aruba 1 (Perret Gentil 6)
Haiti 3 (Pierrot 30, Nazon 38 pen, 61)

Oct 14 – Oranjestad
Puerto Rico 2 (G. Diaz 45, R. Rivera 83 pen)
Sint Maarten 1 (Christina 54)

Oct 14 – Oranjestad
Haiti 5 (Jean Jacques 16, Louicius 42, Nazon 66 pen, Picault 76, Pierrot 89 pen)
Aruba 3 (Ostiana 14 pen, 20, Kruydenhof 78)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Haiti	4	4	0	0	18	5	12
Puerto Rico	4	2	0	2	6	8	6
Sint Maarten	4	2	0	2	6	10	6
Aruba	4	0	0	4	4	11	0

Group B4

Oct 12 – Devonshire Parish
Antigua & Barbuda 0
Dominican Republic 5 (Garcia 11, Romero 13, Vasquez 39, Firpo 88, 90+2 pen)

Oct 12 – Devonshire Parish
Dominica 1 (Joseph 61)
Bermuda 6 (Wells 9, 18, 26 pen, Lewis 49, Scott 85, Bean 90)

Oct 15 – Devonshire Parish
Dominican Republic 5 (De Lucas 14, Morschel 35, Romero 45+1 pen, Firpo 52, Garcia 75)
Antigua & Barbuda 0

Oct 15 – Devonshire Parish
Bermuda 3 (Bredas 37 og, Hall 45, Bean 67)
Dominica 2 (Jules 50, Laville 59 pen)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dominican Rep	4	4	0	0	15	2	12
Bermuda	4	3	0	1	12	6	9
Dominica	4	1	0	3	5	12	3
Antigua & Bar	4	0	0	4	1	13	0

Group C1

Oct 9 – Wildey
US Virgin Islands 0
Barbados 5 (Holligan 42, Reid-Stephen 45+2 pen, 47, 65, Leacock 90+2)

Oct 12 – Wildey
Bahamas 3 (Adderley 13, 23, Bain 30)
US Virgin Islands 1 (Edgar 69)

Oct 15 – Wildey
Barbados 6 (Applewhaite 8, 52, Reid-Stephen 14 pen, Hoyte 26, 64, Leacock 47)
Bahamas 2 (Adderley 6, Brathwaite 43 og)

Final Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barbados* (P)	4	4	0	0	17	4	12
Bahamas	4	1	1	2	10	13	4
US Virgin Islands	4	0	1	3	4	14	1

**Promoted to League B and enter 2025 CONCACAF Gold Cup play-ins*

Group C2

Oct 9 – Belmopan
Anguilla 0
Belize 1 (Velasquez 56)

Oct 12 – Belmopan
Turks & Caicos 2 (Martin 3, Jerome 90+5 pen)
Anguilla 1 (Carpenter 59)

Oct 15 – Belmopan
Belize 3 (Polanco 28, Hernandez 40, Lopez 57)
Turks & Caicos 0

Final Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belize* (P)	4	4	0	0	9	0	12
Anguilla	4	1	0	3	3	4	3
Turks & Caicos	4	1	0	3	2	10	3

**Promoted to League B and enter 2025 CONCACAF Gold Cup play-ins*

Group C3

Oct 9 – Basseterre
British Virgin Islands 1 (Javier 46)
St Kitts & Nevis 3 (Roberts 25, Amory 37, I. Williams 90+5 og)

Oct 12 – Basseterre
Cayman Islands 1 (Douglas 69)
British Virgin Islands 0

Oct 15 – Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 1 (Campbell 90+9 og)
Cayman Islands 1 (Scott 61)

Final Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Kitts & Nevis* (P)	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Cayman Islands* (P)	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
British Virgin Islands	4	0	0	4	1	7	0

**Promoted to League B and enter 2025 CONCACAF Gold Cup play-ins*

AFCON 2025 QUALIFYING

Group A

Oct 11 – Casablanca
Madagascar 1 (Couturier 45+2)
Gambia 1 (Minteh 90+7)

Oct 11 – Tunis
Tunisia 0
Comoros 1 (Said 63)

Oct 14 – El Jadida
Gambia 1 (Barrow 62)
Madagascar 0

Oct 15 – Abidjan
Comoros 1 (Selemani 49)
Tunisia 1 (Meriah 69)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Comoros	4	1	3	0	4	3	6
Gambia	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
Madagascar	4	0	2	2	2	4	2

Group B

Oct 11 – Franceville
Gabon 0
Lesotho 0

Oct 11 – Oujda
Morocco 5 (Ezzalzouli 18, Ounahi 38, 45+2, Hakimi 45, Rahimi 71 pen)
Central African Republic 0

Oct 15 – Durban
Lesotho 0
Gabon 2 (Babicka 55, Effaghe 84)

Oct 15 – Oujda
Central African Republic 0
Morocco 4 (Ben Seghir 34, 38, En-Nesyri 50 pen, Ezzalzouli 66)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	4	0	0	14	1	12
Gabon	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Central African Rep	4	1	0	3	3	12	3
Lesotho	4	0	1	3	1	6	1

Group C

Oct 10 – Praia
Cape Verde 0
Botswana 1 (Orebonye 2)

Oct 11 – Cairo
Egypt 2 (Trezeguet 69, Salah 79)
Mauritania 0

Oct 15 – Nouakchott
Mauritania 0
Egypt 1 (Adel 85)

Oct 15 – Francistown
Botswana 1 (Sesinyi 52)
Cape Verde 0

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	4	4	0	0	10	0	12
Botswana	4	2	0	2	2	5	6
Cape Verde	4	1	0	3	2	5	3
Mauritania	4	1	0	3	1	5	3

Group D

Oct 11 – Abidjan
Benin 3 (Mounie 50, Hountondji 67, Imourane 70)
Rwanda 0

Oct 11 – Uyo
Nigeria 1 (Dele-Bashiru 86)
Libya 0

Oct 15 – Kigali
Rwanda 2 (Nshuti 70, Bizimana 75 pen)
Benin 1 (Hountondji 42)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Benin	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Rwanda	4	1	2	1	3	5	5
Libya	3	0	1	2	2	4	1

Group E

Oct 10 – Annaba
Algeria 5 (Benrahma 29, 55 pen, Aouar 68, Gouiri 86, Amoura 90+5)
Togo 1 (Klidje 11)

Oct 11 – Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 1 (Salvador 34 pen)
Liberia 0

Oct 14 – Monrovia
Liberia 1 (Gibson 53)
Equatorial Guinea 2 (Nlavo 20, Dorian Jr. 90+4)

Oct 14 – Lome
Togo 0
Algeria 1 (Bensebaini 18 pen)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Algeria	4	4	0	0	11	1	12
Equatorial Guinea	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Togo	4	0	2	2	4	9	2
Liberia	4	0	1	3	2	7	1

Group F

Oct 10 – Accra
Ghana 0
Sudan 0

Oct 11 – Talatona
Angola 2 (Mabululu 75 pen, Felicio Milson 85)
Niger 0

Oct 15 – Benghazi
Sudan 2 (Al Tash 62, Abdelrahman 65)
Ghana 0

Oct 15 – Casablanca
Niger 0
Angola 1 (Zini 1)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	4	4	0	0	6	1	12
Sudan	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Ghana	4	0	2	2	1	4	2
Niger	4	0	1	3	1	5	1

Group G

Oct 11 – Ndola
Zambia 0
Chad 0

Oct 11 – San-Pedro
Ivory Coast 4 (Pepe 3, Kessie 51, 76 pen, Diakite 87 pen)
Sierra Leone 1 (Koroma 43)

Oct 15 – Yaounde
Chad 0
Zambia 1 (K. Musonda 70)

Oct 15 – Monrovia
Sierra Leone 1 (Bakayoko 85)
Ivory Coast 0

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	4	3	0	1	8	2	9
Zambia	4	2	1	1	4	4	7
Sierra Leone	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Chad	4	0	2	2	0	0	2

Group H

Oct 10 – Kinshasa
DR Congo 1 (Mzize 53 og)
Tanzania 0

Oct 12 – Abidjan
Guinea 4 (Guirassy 18 pen, 37, 45+2, Cisse 48)
Ethiopia 1 (Markneh 53)

Oct 15 – Dar es Salaam
Tanzania 0
DR Congo 2 (Elia 87, 90+3)

Oct 15 – Abidjan
Ethiopia 0
Guinea 3 (Guirassy 16, 23 pen, Toure 19)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	4	4	0	0	6	0	12
Guinea	4	2	0	2	8	4	6
Tanzania	4	1	1	2	2	4	4
Ethiopia	4	0	1	3	1	9	1

Group I

Oct 11 – Maputo
Mozambique 1 (Ratifo 73)
Eswatini 1 (Mavuso 80)

Oct 11 – Bamako
Mali 1 (Toure 62)
Guinea-Bissau 0

Oct 14 – Mbombela
Eswatini 0
Mozambique 3 (Domingues 11, Ratifo 41, Catamo 59)

Oct 15 – Bissau
Guinea-Bissau 0
Mali 0

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mozambique	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Mali	4	2	2	0	3	1	8
Guinea-Bissau	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
Eswatini	4	0	1	3	1	6	1

Group J

Oct 10 – Johannesburg
Namibia 0
Zimbabwe 1 (Billiat 34 pen)

Oct 11 – Douala
Cameroon 4 (Aboubakar 8 pen, Hongla 39, Mbeumo 43, Bassogog 55)
Kenya 1 (Olunga 41)

Oct 14 – Kampala
Kenya 0
Cameroon 1 (Enow 62)

Oct 14 – Johannesburg
Zimbabwe 3 (Musona 50, 61 pen, Dube 89)
Namibia 1 (Eiseb 90)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Zimbabwe	4	2	2	0	4	1	8
Kenya	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Namibia	4	0	0	4	2	7	0

Group K

Oct 11 – Kampala
Uganda 1 (Mugabi 47)
South Sudan 0

Oct 11 – Gqeberha
South Africa 5 (Mokoena 12, 27, Aubaas 37, Foster 52, Rayners 78)
Congo 0

Oct 15 – Juba
South Sudan 1 (Juma 21)
Uganda 2 (Omedi 15, Leku 66 og)

Oct 15 – Brazzaville
Congo 1 (Bassouamina 45+3)
South Africa 1 (Mokwana 33)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
South Africa	4	2	2	0	11	5	8
Congo	4	1	1	2	2	8	4
South Sudan	4	0	0	4	3	7	0

Group L

Oct 10 – Abidjan
Burkina Faso 4 (D. Ouattara 33, 44, Banse 34, Dayo 49)
Burundi 1 (Kanakimana 4)

Oct 11 – Dakar
Senegal 4 (Gueye 35, Mane 68, Dia 71, Jackson 77)
Malawi 0

Oct 13 – Abidjan
Burundi 0
Burkina Faso 2 (Konate 5, B. Traore 90+4 pen)

Oct 15 – Lilongwe
Malawi 0
Senegal 1 (Mane 90+6)

Current Standings	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Senegal	4	3	1	0	7	1	10
Burundi	4	1	0	3	4	9	3
Malawi	4	0	0	4	3	11	0

2024 ASEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Preliminary Qualifier

Oct 8 – Bandar Seri Begawan
Brunei 0
Timor-Leste 1 (Gali Freitas 47)

Oct 15 – Chonburi
Timor-Leste 0
Brunei 0
Timor-Leste win 1-0 on aggregate

Group A

Dec 8:
Cambodia v Malaysia; Timor-Leste v Thailand
Dec 11:
Malaysia v Timor-Leste; Singapore v Cambodia
Dec 14:
Timor-Leste v Singapore; Thailand v Malaysia
Dec 17:
Singapore v Thailand; Cambodia v Timor-Leste
Dec 20:
Thailand v Cambodia; Malaysia v Singapore

Group B

Dec 9:
Myanmar v Indonesia; Laos v Vietnam
Dec 12:
Indonesia v Laos; Philippines v Myanmar
Dec 15:
Laos v Philippines; Vietnam v Indonesia
Dec 18:
Philippines v Vietnam; Myanmar v Laos
Dec 21:
Vietnam v Myanmar; Indonesia v Philippines

CHAN 2024 QUALIFYING

Northern Zone

Libya, Morocco & Tunisia qualify automatically after Algeria and Egypt did not enter

Western Zone A

First Round

Oct 27: Sierra Leone 1-2 Liberia
Nov 1: Liberia 1-1 Sierra Leone (agg 3-2)

Second Round

Dec 20-22: Liberia v Senegal; Mauritania v Mali; Guinea-Bissau v Guinea
Dec 27-29: Senegal v Liberia; Mali v Mauritania; Guinea v Guinea-Bissau
Cape Verde & Gambia did not enter

Western Zone B

First Round

Oct 25: Togo 2-0 Benin
Nov 2: Benin 1-1 Togo (agg 1-3)

Second Round

Dec 20-22: Togo v Niger; Ivory Coast v Burkina Faso; Ghana v Nigeria
Dec 27-29: Niger v Togo; Burkina Faso v Ivory Coast; Nigeria v Ghana

Central Zone

Dec 20-22: Congo v Equatorial Guinea; Central African Republic v Cameroon; Chad v DR Congo
Dec 27-29: Equatorial Guinea v Congo; DR Congo v Chad; Cameroon v Central African Republic
Sao Tome & Principe and Gabon did not enter

Central & Eastern Zone

First Round

Oct 27: Burundi (w/o) Somalia; Ethiopia (w/o) Eritrea; Sudan 1-0 Tanzania; South Sudan 2-0 Kenya; Djibouti 1-0 Rwanda
Oct 31-Nov 3: Rwanda 3-0 Djibouti (agg 3-1); Tanzania 1-0 Sudan (agg 1-1, *Sudan win 6-5 on pens*); Kenya 1-1 South Sudan (agg 1-3)

Second Round

Dec 20-22: Burundi v Uganda; Ethiopia v Sudan; South Sudan v Rwanda
Dec 27-29: Uganda v Burundi; Sudan v Ethiopia; Rwanda v South Sudan
Kenya, Tanzania & Uganda qualify automatically as hosts, so only the best performing nation (excluding those three countries) will qualify

Southern Zone

First Round

Oct 26-27:
Lesotho 1-0 Namibia; Zimbabwe 0-3 Eswatini
Nov 2-3:
Eswatini 1-0 Zimbabwe (agg 4-0); Namibia 1-0 Lesotho (agg 1-1, *Lesotho win 4-3 on pens*)

Second Round

Dec 20-22: Eswatini v Madagascar; Lesotho v Angola; Mozambique v Zambia
Dec 27-29: Madagascar v Eswatini; Angola v Lesotho; Zambia v Mozambique
Botswana, Comoros, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles & South Africa did not enter

2024 KING'S CUP

Semi-Finals

Oct 11 – Songkhla
Syria 1 (Osman 35)
Tajikistan 0

Oct 11 – Songkhla
Thailand 3 (Songkrasin 53, Suphanat 68, 88)
Philippines 1 (Kristensen 63)

Third Place Play-Off

Oct 14 – Songkhla
Tajikistan 0
Philippines 3 (Holtmann 47, J. Tabinas 58, Bailey 62)

Final

Oct 14 – Songkhla
Thailand 2 (Ekanit 44, Chanathip 90+1)
Syria 1 (Ham 53)

FRIENDLIES

Oct 10 – Vaduz
Liechtenstein 1 (Hasler 16)
Hong Kong 0

Oct 10 – Yangon
Myanmar 2 (Lwin Moe Aung 16, Maung Maung Lwin 53)
Sri Lanka 0

Oct 11 – Phnom Penh
Cambodia 3 (Ratanak 48, 88, Chanthea 62)
Chinese Taipei 2 (Ogawa 44 og, Chen 83)

Oct 12 – Nam Dinh
Vietnam 1 (Singh Sandhu 38 og)
India 1 (Choudhary 53)

Oct 12 – Austin
United States 2 (Musah 49, Pepi 90+4)
Panama 0

Oct 13 – Andorra la Vella
Andorra 2 (Berto 10, Pujol 39)
San Marino 0

Oct 13 – Yangon
Myanmar 0
Sri Lanka 0

Oct 14 – North Shore
New Zealand 4 (Just 53, Garbett 61, Wood 72, Rogerson 90)
Malaysia 0

Oct 15 – Toronto
Canada 2 (Larin 44, David 87)
Panama 1 (Fajardo 69)

Oct 15 – Zapopan
Mexico 2 (Jimenez 22, Huerta 49)
United States 0

Oct 15 – Hong Kong
Hong Kong 3 (Orr 29, Everton 35, Juninho 90+2)
Cambodia 0

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Club Football EUROPE

2024-25 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Matchday 3

Oct 22 – Milan
Milan (Ita) 3 (Pulisic 34, Reijnders 61, 71)
Club Brugge (Bel) 1 (Sabbe 51)

Oct 22 – Monaco
Monaco (Fra) 5 (Minamino 20, 70, Embolo 45+4, Singo 54, Akliouche 90+7)
Red Star Belgrade (Srb) 1 (Ndiaye 27 pen)

Oct 22 – London
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Riznyk 29 og)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 0

Oct 22 – Birmingham
Aston Villa (Eng) 2 (McGinn 55, Duran 64)
Bologna (Ita) 0

Oct 22 – Girona
Girona (Spa) 2 (Gutierrez 42, Juanpe 73)
Slovan Bratislava (Svk) 0

Oct 22 – Turin
Juventus (Ita) 0
Stuttgart (Ger) 1 (Toure 90+2)

Oct 22 – Paris
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 1 (Hakimi 55)
PSV (Ned) 1 (Lang 34)

Oct 22 – Madrid
Real Madrid (Spa) 5 (Rudiger 60, Vinicius Junior 62, 86, 90+3, Vazquez 83)
B. Dortmund (Ger) 2 (Malen 30, Gittens 34)

Oct 22 – Klagenfurt
Sturm Graz (Aut) 0
Sporting (Por) 2 (Santos 23, Gyokeres 53)

Oct 23 – Bergamo
Atalanta (Ita) 0
Celtic (Sco) 0

Oct 23 – Guingamp
Brest (Fra) 1 (Lees-Melou 39)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1 (Wirtz 24)

Oct 23 – Madrid
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 1 (Alvarez 8)
Lille (Fra) 3 (Zhegrova 61, David 74 pen, 89)

Oct 23 – Bern
Young Boys (Sui) 0
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Thuram 90+3)

Oct 23 – Barcelona
Barcelona (Spa) 4 (Raphinha 1, 45, 56, Lewandowski 36)
Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Kane 18)

Oct 23 – Salzburg
Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) 0
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 2 (Kulenovic 49, Petkovic 84)

Oct 23 – Manchester
Manchester City (Eng) 5 (Foden 3, Haaland 58, 68, Stones 64, Nunes 88 pen)
Sparta Prague (Cze) 0

Oct 23 – Leipzig
RB Leipzig (Ger) 0
Liverpool (Eng) 1 (Nunez 27)

Oct 23 – Lisbon
Benfica (Por) 1 (Akturkoglu 66)
Feyenoord (Ned) 3 (Ueda 12, Milambo 33, 90+2)

Matchday 4

Nov 5 – Eindhoven
PSV (Ned) 4 (Flamingo 16, Tillman 33, Bakayoko 83, Krejci 88 og)
Girona (Spa) 0

Nov 5 – Bratislava
Slovan Bratislava (Svk) 1 (Strelec 5)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) 4 (Spikic 10, Sucic 30, Kulenovic 54, 72)

Nov 5 – Bologna
Bologna (Ita) 0
Monaco (Fra) 1 (Kehrer 86)

Nov 5 – Dortmund
Borussia Dortmund (Ger) 1 (Malen 85)
Sturm Graz (Aut) 0

Nov 5 – Glasgow
Celtic (Sco) 3 (Kuhn 35, 45+1, Hatate 72)
RB Leipzig (Ger) 1 (Baumgartner 23)

Nov 5 – Liverpool
Liverpool (Eng) 4 (Diaz 61, 83, 90+2, Gakpo 63)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 0

Nov 5 – Lille
Lille (Fra) 1 (David 27)
Juventus (Ita) 1 (Vlahovic 60 pen)

Nov 5 – Madrid
Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Vinicius Junior 73 pen)
Milan (Ita) 3 (Thiaw 12, Morata 39, Reijnders 73)

Nov 5 – Lisbon
Sporting (Por) 4 (Gyokeres 38, 49 pen, 81 pen, Araujo 46)
Manchester City (Eng) 1 (Foden 4)

Nov 6 – Brugge
Club Brugge (Bel) 1 (Vanaken 52 pen)
Aston Villa (Eng) 0

Nov 6 – Gelsenkirchen
Shakhtar (Ukr) 2 (Zubkov 31, Sudakov 41)
Young Boys (Sui) 1 (Imeri 27)

Nov 6 – Prague
Sparta Prague (Cze) 1 (Olatunji 90+2)
Brest (Fra) 2 (Fernandes 37, Kairinen 80 og)

Nov 6 – Munich
Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Musiala 67)
Benfica (Por) 0

Nov 6 – Milan
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Calhanoglu 45+3 pen)
Arsenal (Eng) 0

Nov 6 – Rotterdam
Feyenoord (Ned) 1 (Hadj Moussa 80)
Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) 3 (Konate 45+2, 58, Guindo 86)

Nov 6 – Belgrade
Red Star Belgrade (Srb) 2 (Silas 27, Milson 84)
Barcelona (Spa) 5 (Martinez 13, Lewandowski 43, 53, Raphinha 55, Fermin 76)

Nov 6 – Paris
Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 1 (Zaire-Emery 14)
Atletico Madrid (Spa) 2 (Molina 18, Correa 90+3)

Nov 6 – Stuttgart
Stuttgart (Ger) 0
Atalanta (Ita) 2 (Lookman 51, Zaniolo 88)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	4	4	0	0	10	1	12
Sporting	4	3	1	0	9	2	10
Monaco	4	3	1	0	10	4	10
Brest	4	3	1	0	9	3	10
Inter	4	3	1	0	6	0	10
Barcelona	4	3	0	1	15	5	9
B. Dortmund	4	3	0	1	13	6	9
Aston Villa	4	3	0	1	6	1	9
Atalanta	4	2	2	0	5	0	8
Man City	4	2	1	1	10	4	7
Juventus	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Arsenal	4	2	1	1	3	1	7
B. Leverkusen	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Lille	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Celtic	4	2	1	1	9	9	7
Dinamo Zagreb	4	2	1	1	10	12	7
Bayern Munich	4	2	0	2	11	7	6
Real Madrid	4	2	0	2	9	7	6
Benfica	4	2	0	2	7	5	6
Milan	4	2	0	2	7	6	6
Feyenoord	4	2	0	2	7	10	6
Club Brugge	4	2	0	2	3	6	6
Atletico Madrid	4	2	0	2	5	9	6
PSV	4	1	2	1	7	5	5
PSG	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Sparta Prague	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Stuttgart	4	1	1	2	3	6	4
Shakhtar	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Girona	4	1	0	3	4	8	3
RB Salzburg	4	1	0	3	3	10	3
Bologna	4	0	1	3	0	5	1
RB Leipzig	4	0	0	4	4	9	0
Sturm Graz	4	0	0	4	1	6	0
Young Boys	4	0	0	4	1	11	0
Red Star Belgrade	4	0	0	4	4	16	0
S. Bratislava	4	0	0	4	2	15	0

2024-25 EUROPA LEAGUE

Matchday 3

Oct 23 – Istanbul
Galatasaray (Tur) 4 (Icardi 28, Pettersson 39 og, Yilmaz 44, Akgun 83)
Elfsborg (Swe) 3 (Hult 52, Baidoo 65 pen, Larsson 90+2)

Oct 23 – Braga
Braga (Por) 1 (Niakate 64)
Bodo/Glimt (Nor) 2 (Evjen 53, Nielsen 90+4)

Oct 24 – Rome
Roma (Ita) 1 (Dovbyk 23 pen)
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 0

Oct 24 – Frankfurt
Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 1 (Larsson 79)
RFS (Lva) 0

Oct 24 – Herning
Midtjylland (Den) 1 (Diao 18)
Union Saint-Gilloise (Bel) 0

Oct 24 – Budapest
Ferencvaros (Hun) 1 (Bombito 15 og)
Nice (Fra) 0

Oct 24 – Belgrade
Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 1 (Turgeman 81)
Real Sociedad (Spa) 2 (Pacheco 19, Gomez 64)

Oct 24 – Thessaloniki
PAOK (Gre) 2 (Tissoudali 84, Rahman 90+3)
Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 2 (Havel 31, Vydra 39)

Oct 24 – Baku
Qarabag (Aze) 0
Ajax (Ned) 3 (Taylor 36, Weghorst 74 pen, Akpom 77)

Oct 24 – Bilbao
Athletic Club (Spa) 1 (N. Williams 33)
Slavia Prague (Cze) 0

Oct 24 – Porto
Porto (Por) 2 (Djalo 45+2, Omorodion 75)
Hoffenheim (Ger) 0

Oct 24 – Enschede
Twente (Ned) 0
Lazio (Ita) 2 (Pedro 35, Isaksen 87)

Oct 24 – Istanbul
Fenerbahce (Tur) 1 (En-Nesyri 49)
Manchester United (Eng) 1 (Eriksen 15)

Oct 24 – Malmo
Malmo (Swe) 0
Olympiacos (Gre) 1 (El Kaabi 30)

Oct 24 – Lyon
Lyon (Fra) 0
Besiktas (Tur) 1 (Fernandes 71)

Oct 24 – Glasgow
Rangers (Sco) 4 (Lawrence 10, Cerny 31, 55, Igamane 71)
FCSB (Rou) 0

Oct 24 – Brussels
Anderlecht (Bel) 2 (Edozie 67, Dreyer 90+5)
Ludogorets (Bul) 0

Oct 24 – London
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 1 (Richarlison 53 pen)
AZ (Ned) 0

Matchday 4

Nov 6 – Istanbul
Besiktas (Tur) 2 (Muci 76, Kilicsoy 85)
Malmo (Swe) 1 (Rieks 90+3)

Nov 7 – Frankfurt
Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger) 1 (Marmoush 53)
Slavia Prague (Cze) 0

Nov 7 – Bodo
Bodo/Glimt (Nor) 1 (Berg 41)
Qarabag (Aze) 2 (Bayramov 22, Zoubir 69)

Nov 7 – Bucharest
FCSB (Rou) 2 (Tanase 16, Birligea 46)
Midtjylland (Den) 0

Nov 7 – Istanbul
Galatasaray (Tur) 3 (Akgun 6, Osimhen 31, 39)
Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 2 (Lankshear 18, Solanke 69)

Nov 7 – Boras
Elfsborg (Swe) 1 (Holten 84)
Braga (Por) 1 (Ouma 67 og)

Nov 7 – Nice
Nice (Fra) 2 (Boga 66, Cho 88)
Twente (Ned) 2 (Rots 8, Lammers 60)

Nov 7 – Piraeus
Olympiacos (Gre) 1 (El Kaabi 56)
Rangers (Sco) 1 (Dessers 64)

Nov 7 – Razgrad
Ludogorets (Bul) 1 (Marcus 20)
Athletic Club (Spa) 2 (I. Williams 73, Serrano 74)

Nov 7 – Brussels
Union Saint-Gilloise (Bel) 1 (Mac Allister 77)
Roma (Ita) 1 (Mancini 62)

Nov 7 – Amsterdam
Ajax (Ned) 5 (Traore 14, Taylor 27, Godts 39, Brobbey 61, Fitz-Jim 69)
Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 0

Nov 7 – Alkmaar
AZ (Ned) 3 (Daal 59, Smit 75, Kasius 87)
Fenerbahce (Tur) 1 (En-Nesyri 70)

Nov 7 – Hamburg
Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 0
Ferencvaros (Hun) 4 (Varga 54, 67, Zachariassen 56, Saldanha 76)

Nov 7 – Riga
RFS (Lva) 1 (Ndiaye 90+6 og)
Anderlecht (Bel) 1 (Stroeykens 85)

Nov 7 – Plzen
Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 2 (Adu 13, Kalvach 90)
Real Sociedad (Spa) 1 (Oskarsson 35)

Nov 7 – Manchester
Manchester United (Eng) 2 (Amad 55, 70)
PAOK (Gre) 0

Nov 7 – Rome
Lazio (Ita) 2 (Romagnoli 45+2, Pedro 90+2)
Porto (Por) 1 (Eustaquio 66)

Nov 7 – Sinsheim
Hoffenheim (Ger) 2 (Gendrey 47, Tohumcu 90+6)
Lyon (Fra) 2 (Abner 66, Lacazette 90+3)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lazio	4	4	0	0	11	2	12
Ajax	4	3	1	0	13	1	10
Galatasaray	4	3	1	0	12	8	10
E. Frankfurt	4	3	1	0	8	4	10
Anderlecht	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Athletic Club	4	3	1	0	6	2	10
Tottenham	4	3	0	1	8	4	9
FCSB	4	3	0	1	7	5	9
Lyon	4	2	1	1	8	4	7
Rangers	4	2	1	1	8	5	7
Olympiacos	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Bodo/Glimt	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Midtjylland	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Ferencvaros	4	2	0	2	7	4	6
Man United	4	1	3	0	7	5	6
Viktoria Plzen	4	1	3	0	7	6	6
AZ	4	2	0	2	6	6	6
Besiktas	4	2	0	2	4	8	6
Hoffenheim	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Roma	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Fenerbahce	4	1	2	1	5	6	5
Porto	4	1	1	2	8	8	4
Slavia Prague	4	1	1	2	3	3	4
Elfsborg	4	1	1	2	7	8	4
Real Sociedad	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Braga	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Twente	4	0	3	1	4	6	3
Malmo	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Qarabag	4	1	0	3	3	9	3
Union SG	4	0	2	2	2	4	2
Nice	4	0	2	2	4	8	2
RFS	4	0	2	2	4	8	2
PAOK	4	0	1	3	3	8	1
Ludogorets	4	0	1	3	1	6	1
Maccabi Tel Aviv	4	0	0	4	2	11	0
Dynamo Kyiv	4	0	0	4	0	10	0

2024-25 CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Matchday 2

Oct 24 – Reykjavik
Vikingur Reykjavik (Ist) 3 (Sigurpalsson 17, Djuric 76, G. Vatnhamar 83)
Cercle Brugge (Bel) 1 (Olaigbe 16)

Oct 24 – Nicosia
APOEL (Cyp) 0
Borac Banja Luka (Bih) 1 (Savic 63)

Oct 24 – Stockholm
Djurgarden (Swe) 1 (Stensson 62)
Vitoria Guimaraes (Por) 2 (Silva 58, Santos 79)

Oct 24 – St Gallen
St Gallen (Sui) 2 (Mambimbi 23, Gortler 62)
Fiorentina (Ita) 4 (Martinez Quarta 50, Ikone 54, 69, Gosens 90+4)

Oct 24 – Edinburgh
Hearts (Sco) 2 (Forrest 17, Spittal 23)
Omonia (Cyp) 0

Oct 24 – Bialystok
Jagiellonia Bialystok (Pol) 2 (Pululu 69, 72)
Petrocub Hincesti (And) 0

Oct 24 – Gent
Gent (Bel) 2 (Fadiga 24, Brown 90+5)
Molde (Nor) 1 (Daehli 78)

Oct 24 – Belfast
Larne (Nir) 1 (Gallagher 48)
Shamrock Rovers (Iri) 4 (Honohan 3, Kenny 24, Cosgrove 30 og, Burke 54)

Oct 24 – Celje
Celje (Svn) 5 (Svetlin 5, Brnic 30, Seslar 34, Kucys 51, 77)
Istanbul Basaksehir (Tur) 1 (Pelkas 75)

Oct 24 – Athens
Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Pellistri 69)
Chelsea (Eng) 4 (Felix 22, 55, Mudryk 49, Nkunku 59 pen)

Oct 24 – Vienna
Rapid Vienna (Aut) 1 (Beljo 31)
Noah (Arm) 0

Oct 24 – Mlada Boleslav
Mlada Boleslav (Cze) 0
Lugano (Sui) 1 (Steffen 38)

Oct 24 – Backa Topola
TSC Backa Topola (Srb) 0
Legia Warsaw (Pol) 3 (Kapustka 11, Luquinhas 47, Chodyna 62)

Oct 24 – Helsinki
HJK (Fin) 1 (Moller 46)
Dinamo Minsk (Blr) 0

Oct 24 – Ljubljana
Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) 2 (Blanco 14, Lucas 80)
LASK (Aut) 0

Oct 24 – Limassol
Pafos (Cyp) 0
Heidenheim (Ger) 1 (Mainka 25)

Oct 24 – Seville
Real Betis (Spa) 1 (Ezzalzouli 8)
Copenhagen (Den) 1 (Diks 77 pen)

Oct 24 – Shrewsbury
The New Saints (Wal) 2 (Holden 40, McManus 78 pen)
Astana (Kaz) 0

Matchday 3

Nov 7 – Chisinau
Petrocub Hincesti (And) 0
Rapid Vienna (Aut) 3 (Bolla 13, Burgstaller 53, 79)

Nov 7 – Backa Topola
TSC (Srb) 4 (Stanic 4, 62, Pantovic 59, 83)
Lugano (Sui) 1 (Mahmoud 61)

Nov 7 – Helsinki
HJK (Fin) 0
Olimpija Ljubljana (Svn) 2 (Brest 57, Agba 68)

Nov 7 – Gent
Gent (Bel) 1 (Gandelman 31)
Omonia (Cyp) 0

Nov 7 – Warsaw
Legia Warsaw (Pol) 4 (Luquinhas 10, 55, Gual 51 pen, 59)
Dinamo Minsk (Blr) 0

Nov 7 – Limassol
Pafos (Cyp) 1 (Anderson 87)
Astana (Kaz) 0

Nov 7 – Dublin
Shamrock Rovers (Irl) 2 (Kenny 23, Watts 38)
The New Saints (Wal) 1 (J. Williams 14)

Nov 7 – Kopavogur
Vikingur Reykjavik (Isl) 2 (Hansen 17, Gunnarsson 23)
Borac Banja Luka (Bih) 0

Nov 7 – Nicosia
APOEL (Cyp) 2 (Donis 37, Abagna 45+1)
Fiorentina (Ita) 1 (Ikone 74)

Nov 7 – London
Chelsea (Eng) 8 (Adarabioyo 12, Guiu 13, Disasi 18, Felix 21, 41, Mudryk 39, Nkunku 69, 76 pen)
Noah (Arm) 0

Nov 7 – Stockholm
Djurgarden (Swe) 2 (Gulliksen 49, Hummet 72)
Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Djuricic 17)

Nov 7 – Copenhagen
Copenhagen (Den) 2 (Chiakha 79, 83)
Istanbul Basaksehir (Tur) 2 (Keny 26, Piatek 80)

Nov 7 – Edinburgh
Hearts (Sco) 0
Heidenheim (Ger) 2 (Conteh 57, Schoppner 89)

Nov 7 – Bialystok
Jagiellonia Bialystok (Pol) 3 (Pululu 6, Hansen 70, 75)
Molde (Nor) 0

Nov 7 – Belfast
Larne (Nir) 1 (Diaby 4 og)
St Gallen (Sui) 2 (Gortler 29, Vandermersch 79)

Nov 7 – Linz
LASK (Aut) 0
Cercle Brugge (Bel) 0

Nov 7 – Seville
Real Betis (Spa) 2 (Natan 75, Juanmi 90+4)
Celje (Svn) 1 (Nieto 81)

Nov 7 – Guimaraes
Vitoria Guimaraes (Por) 2 (Silva 40 pen, Rivas 59)
Mlada Boleslav (Cze) 1 (Kusej 72)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	3	3	0	0	16	3	9
Legia Warsaw	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Jag Bialystok	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Rapid Vienna	3	3	0	0	6	1	9
Vitoria Guimaraes	3	3	0	0	7	3	9
Heidenheim	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Shamrock Rovers	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Fiorentina	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Pafos	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Olimpija Ljubljana	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Lugano	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Hearts	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Gent	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Vikingur Reykjavik	3	2	0	1	5	5	6
Cercle Brugge	3	1	1	1	7	5	4
Djurgarden	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
APOEL	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Real Betis	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Borac Banja Luka	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Celje	3	1	0	2	7	6	3
Omonia	3	1	0	2	4	3	3
Molde	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
TSC	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
The New Saints	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Astana	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
HJK	3	1	0	2	1	5	3
St Gallen	3	1	0	2	6	11	3
Noah	3	1	0	2	2	9	3
Copenhagen	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
LASK	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Panathinaikos	3	0	1	2	3	7	1
Istanbul Basaksehir	3	0	1	2	4	9	1
Mlada Boleslav	3	0	0	3	1	5	0
Dinamo Minsk	3	0	0	3	1	7	0
Larne	3	0	0	3	2	9	0
Petrocub Hincesti	3	0	0	3	1	9	0

WORLD

2024 FIFA INTERCONTINENTAL CUP

Second Round

Oct 29 – Cairo
Al Ahly (Egy) 3 (Abou Ali 32, Ashour 55, Magdy Afsha 90+2 pen)
Al Ain (UAE) 0

SOUTH AMERICA

2024 COPA LIBERTADORES

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

Oct 22 – Belo Horizonte
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 3 (Deyverson 22, 70, Paulinho 74)
River Plate (Arg) 0

Oct 23 – Rio de Janeiro
Botafogo (Bra) 5 (Savarino 51, 59, Barboza 55, Luiz Henrique 73, Igor Jesus 79)
Penarol (Uru) 0

Semi-Finals – 2nd Leg

Oct 29 – Buenos Aires
River Plate (Arg) 0
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 0
Atletico Mineiro win 3-0 on aggregate

Oct 30 – Montevideo
Penarol (Uru) 3 (Baez 31, 66, Batista 89)
Botafogo (Bra) 1 (Almada 88)
Botafogo win 6-3 on aggregate

2024 COPA SUDAMERICANA

Semi-Finals – 1st Leg

Oct 23 – Belo Horizonte
Cruzeiro (Bra) 1 (Kaio Jorge 50)
Lanus (Arg) 1 (Carrera 73)

Oct 24 – Sao Paulo
Corinthians (Bra) 2 (Yuri Alberto 11, 33)
Racing (Arg) 2 (Salas 6, Martirena 54)

Semi-Finals – 2nd Leg

Oct 30 – Lanus
Lanus (Arg) 0
Cruzeiro (Bra) 1 (Kaio Jorge 45+1)
Cruzeiro win 2-1 on aggregate

Oct 31 – Avellaneda
Racing (Arg) 2 (Quintero 36 pen, 39)
Corinthians (Bra) 1 (Yuri Alberto 6)
Racing win 4-3 on aggregate

AFRICA

2024-25 CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Nov 26-27: TP Mazembe (Cod) v MC Alger (Alg); Young Africans (Tan) v Al Hilal (Sud)
Dec 6-7: Al Hilal (Sud) v TP Mazembe (Cod); MC Alger (Alg) v Young Africans (Tan)
Dec 13-14: MC Alger (Alg) v Al Hilal (Sud); TP Mazembe (Cod) v Young Africans (Tan)

Group B

Nov 26-27: Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA) v Maniema Union (Cod); Raja (Mar) v AS FAR (Mar)
Dec 6-7: AS FAR (Mar) v Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA); Maniema Union (Cod) v Raja (Mar)
Dec 13-14: Maniema Union (Cod) v AS FAR (Mar); Mamelodi Sundowns (RSA) v Raja (Mar)

Group C

Nov 26-27: Al Ahly (Egy) v Stade d'Abidjan (Civ); CR Belouizdad (Alg) v Orlando Pirates (RSA)
Dec 6-7: Orlando Pirates (RSA) v Al Ahly (Egy); Stade d'Abidjan (Civ) v CR Belouizdad (Alg)
Dec 13-14: Stade d'Abidjan (Civ) v Orlando Pirates (RSA); Al Ahly (Egy) v CR Belouizdad (Alg)

Group D

Nov 26-27: Esperance (Tun) v Djoliba (Mli); Pyramids (Egy) v Sagrada Esperanca (Ang)
Dec 6-7: Sagrada Esperanca (Ang) v Esperance (Tun); Djoliba (Mli) v Pyramids (Egy)
Dec 13-14: Djoliba (Mli) v Sagrada Esperanca (Ang); Esperance (Tun) v Pyramids (Egy)

2024-25 CAF CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

Nov 28: Simba (Tan) v Bravos do Maquis (Ang); CS Sfaxien (Tun) v CS Constantine (Alg)
Dec 8: Constantine (Alg) v Simba (Tan); Bravos do Maquis (Ang) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)
Dec 15: Bravos do Maquis (Ang) v Constantine (Alg); Simba (Tan) v CS Sfaxien (Tun)

Group B

Nov 28: RS Berkane (Mar) v Desportivo Lunda Sul (Ang); Stade Malien (Mli) v Stellenbosch (RSA)
Dec 8: Stellenbosch (RSA) v RS Berkane (Mar); Desportivo Lunda Sul (Ang) v Stade Malien (Mli)
Dec 15: RS Berkane (Mar) v Stade Malien (Mli); Desportivo Lunda Sul (Ang) v Stellenbosch (RSA)

Group C

Nov 28: USM Alger (Alg) v Orapa United (Bot); ASEC Abidjan (Civ) v ASC Jaraaf (Sen)
Dec 8: ASC Jaraaf (Sen) v USM Alger (Alg); Orapa United (Bot) v ASEC Abidjan (Civ)
Dec 15: Orapa United (Bot) v ASC Jaraaf (Sen); USM Alger (Alg) v ASEC Abidjan (Civ)

Group D

Nov 28: Zamalek (Egy) v Black Bulls (Moz); Al Masry (Egy) v Enyimba (Nga)
Dec 8: Enyimba (Nga) v Zamalek (Egy); Black Bulls (Moz) v Al Masry (Egy)
Dec 15: Black Bulls (Moz) v Enyimba (Nga); Zamalek (Egy) v Al Masry (Egy)

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE

Sao Tome League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Agrosport*	22	14	7	1	45	16	49
Inter Bom-Bom	22	14	4	4	40	16	46
Militar 6 Setembro	22	9	9	4	40	24	36
UDRA	22	9	8	5	31	23	35
Juba de Diogo Simao	22	9	6	7	32	28	33
Sporting Praia Cruz	22	7	8	7	27	32	29
Alianca Nacional	22	7	6	9	23	24	27
Vitoria	22	8	2	12	32	36	26
Trindade	21	6	6	9	19	35	24
Guadalupe	22	4	10	8	24	29	22
Caixao Grande	21	5	3	13	17	33	18
Palmar Lusitano	22	2	5	15	13	47	11

*Advance to final

Principe League

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto Real*	20	16	3	1	71	15	51
1º de Maio	20	9	6	5	41	25	33
Operario	20	8	8	4	38	20	32
Sporting Principe	20	6	2	12	23	42	20
Sundy	20	4	6	10	21	47	18
UDAPB	20	2	5	13	15	60	11

*Advance to final

Final

Oct 18: Porto Real 0-1 Agrosport
Oct 22: Agrosport 2-1 Porto Real (agg 3-1)

2024 EGYPTIAN SUPER CUP

Semi-Finals

Oct 20: Pyramids 1-1 Zamalek (*Zamalek win 5-4 on pens*); Al Ahly 2-1 Ceramica Cleopatra

Third Place Play-Off

Oct 24: Ceramica Cleopatra 2-2 Pyramids (*Pyramids win 5-4 on pens*)

Final

Oct 24: Al Ahly 0-0 Zamalek (*After Extra-Time. Al Ahly win 7-6 on pens*)

ASIA

2024-25 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE ELITE

West Region

Matchday 3

Oct 21 – Karbala
Al Shorta (Irq) 0
Pakhtakor (Uzb) 0

Oct 21 – Doha
Al Sadd (Qat) 1 (Uribe 45+2)
Persepolis (Irn) 0

Oct 21 – Al Ain
Al Ain (UAE) 4 (Rahimi 39, 67, 90+6 pen, Sanabria 63)
Al Hilal (KSA) 5 (Lodi 26, Milinkovic-Savic 45+2, S. Al Dawsari 45+5, 65, 75)

Oct 21 – Al Rayyan
Al Rayyan (Qat) 1 (Al Hamad 65 og)
Al Ahli (KSA) 2 (Veiga 16, Al Buraikan 38)

Oct 22 – Dubai
Esteghlal (Irn) 0
Al Nassr (KSA) 1 (Laporte 81)

Oct 22 – Al Khor
Al Gharafa (Qat) 1 (Sassi 44)
Al Wasl (UAE) 2 (Lima 84, Success 90+2)

Matchday 4

Nov 4 – Dubai
Al Wasl (UAE) 1 (Perez 29)
Al Sadd (Qat) 1 (Saiss 61)

Nov 4 – Jeddah
Al Ahli (KSA) 5 (Firmino 14, 45+5, Al Buraikan 53, Mahrez 61, 65)
Al Shorta (Irq) 1 (Jassim 29)

Nov 4 – Dubai
Persepolis (Irn) 1 (Faraji 53)
Al Gharafa (Qat) 1 (Al Ganehi 56)

Nov 4 – Riyadh
Al Hilal (KSA) 3 (Mitrovic 15, 33, 74)
Esteghlal (Irn) 0

Nov 5 – Tashkent
Pakhtakor (Uzb) 0
Al Rayyan (Qat) 1 (Shehata 51)

Nov 5 – Riyadh
Al Nassr (KSA) 5 (Talisca 5, 90+4, Ronaldo 31, Cardoso 37 og, Wesley 81)
Al Ain (UAE) 1 (Bento 56 og)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hilal	4	4	0	0	16	5	12
Al Ahli	4	4	0	0	10	2	12
Al Nassr	4	3	1	0	9	3	10
Al Sadd	4	2	2	0	5	2	8
Al Wasl	4	2	1	1	4	4	7
Al Gharafa	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Al Rayyan	4	1	0	3	4	7	3
Esteghlal	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Persepolis	4	0	2	2	2	4	2
Pakhtakor	4	0	2	2	1	3	2
Al Shorta	4	0	2	2	2	11	2
Al Ain	4	0	1	3	8	15	1

East Region

Matchday 3

Oct 22 – Yongin
Gwangju (Kor) 3 (Asani 3, 6, Park Jun-heong 88 og)
Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mas) 1 (Baharudin 28)

Oct 22 – Shanghai
Shanghai Port (Chn) 3 (Li Ang 2, Wu Lei 41, Vargas 86)
Central Coast Mariners (Aus) 2 (Doka 61, Duarte 90+4)

Oct 22 – Jinan
Shandong Taishan (Chn) 2 (Cryzan 43, Zheng Zheng 90+2)
Yokohama F. Marinos (Jpn) 2 (Lopes 54, Matheus 87)

Oct 22 – Buriram
Buriram United (Tha) 1 (Bissoli 56)
Pohang Steelers (Kor) 0

Oct 23 – Ulsan
Ulsan HD (Kor) 0
Vissel Kobe (Jpn) 2 (Miyashiro 48, 73)

Oct 23 – Shanghai
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 2 (Wang Haijian 24, Andre Luis 90+3)
Kawasaki Frontale (Jpn) 0

Matchday 4

Nov 5 – Gosford
Central Coast Mariners (Aus) 2 (Ngor 75, Brandtman 90+5)
Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 2 (Andre Luis 50, Yu Hanchao 64)

Nov 5 – Kawasaki
Kawasaki Frontale (Jpn) 3 (Ieriaga 12, Segawa 13, Van Wermeskerken 33)
Shanghai Port (Chn) 1 (Vargas 83)

Nov 5 – Kobe
Vissel Kobe (Jpn) 2 (Miyashiro 45+3, Sasaki 54)
Gwangju (Kor) 0

Nov 5 – Johor Bahru
Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mas) 3 (Aiman 8, Arribas 67, Bergson 88)
Ulsan HD (Kor) 0

Nov 6 – Pohang
Pohang Steelers (Kor) 4 (Jeong Jae-hee 30, Jorge Luiz 64, Wanderson 68, Oberdan 76)
Shandong Taishan (Chn) 2 (Chen Pu 33, Bi Jinhao 90+4)

Nov 6 – Yokohama
Yokohama F. Marinos (Jpn) 5 (Inoue 11, Anderson Lopes 45+1 pen, 57, Etheridge 45+3 og, Uenaka 66)
Buriram United (Tha) 0

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Vissel Kobe	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Gwangju	4	3	0	1	11	6	9
Yokohama FM	4	2	1	1	14	9	7
Johor DT	4	2	1	1	9	5	7
Shanghai Shenhua	4	2	1	1	8	6	7
Buriram United	4	2	1	1	3	6	7
Pohang Steelers	4	2	0	2	8	7	6
Kawasaki	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Shandong Taishan	4	1	1	2	8	9	4
Shanghai Port	4	1	1	2	6	10	4
CC Mariners	4	0	1	3	6	10	1
Ulsan HD	4	0	0	4	0	10	0

2024-25 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE TWO

West Region

Group A

Oct 23: Ravshan Kulob (Tjk) 1-3 Tractor (Irn)
Nov 6: Tractor (Irn) 7-0 Ravshan Kulob (Tjk)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tractor	3	3	0	0	13	1	9
Al Wakrah	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Ravshan Kulob	3	0	0	3	1	11	0
Mohun Bagan*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Withdrew

Group B

Oct 23: Al Taawoun (KSA) 2-1 Altyn Asyr (Tkm); Al Quwa Al Jawiya (Irq) 1-2 Al Khaldiya (Bhr)
Nov 6: Altyn Asyr (Tkm) 0-4 Al Taawoun (KSA); Al Khaldiya (Bhr) 4-1 Al Quwa Al Jawiya (Irq)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Taawoun	4	3	0	1	10	5	9
Al Khaldiya	4	3	0	1	9	5	9
Al Quwa Al Jawiya	4	2	0	2	6	8	6
Altyn Asyr	4	0	0	4	2	9	0

Group C

Oct 22: Sharjah (UAE) 3-1 Sepahan (Irn); Istiklol (Tjk) 0-1 Al Wehdat (Jor)
Nov 5: Sepahan (Irn) 3-1 Sharjah (UAE); Al Wehdat (Jor) 1-0 Istiklol (Tjk)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Wehdat	4	3	1	0	6	3	10
Sharjah	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Sepahan	4	2	0	2	9	6	6
Istiklol	4	0	0	4	0	7	0

Group D

Oct 23:
Shabab Al Ahli (UAE) 4-1 Al Kuwait (Kuw); Al Hussein Irbid (Jor) 2-1 Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb)
Nov 6: Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb) 1-2 Al Hussein Irbid (Jor); Al Kuwait (Kuw) 3-3 Shabab Al Ahli (UAE)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Hussein Irbid	4	3	0	1	7	6	9
Shabab Al Ahli	4	2	1	1	11	7	7
Nasar Qarshi	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Al Kuwait	4	0	2	2	5	9	2

East Region

Group E

Oct 23-25: Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jpn) 2-1 Sydney FC (Aus); Kaya–Iloilo (Phi) 1-2 Eastern (Hkg)
Nov 7:
Sydney FC (Aus) 0-1 Sanfrecce Hiroshima (Jpn); Eastern (Hkg) 1-2 Kaya–Iloilo (Phi)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sanfrecce H.	4	4	0	0	9	3	12
Sydney FC	4	2	0	2	10	4	6
Eastern	4	1	0	3	5	11	3
Kaya-Iloilo	4	1	0	3	4	10	3

Group F

Oct 24: Port (Tha) 1-0 Zhejiang (Chn); Persib Bandung (Idn) 1-1 Lion City Sailors (Sgp)
Oct 30: Port (Tha) 1-3 Lion City Sailors (Sgp)
Nov 7: Lion City Sailors (Sgp) 2-3 Persib Bandung (Idn); Zhejiang (Chn) 1-2 Port (Tha)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Port	4	3	0	1	5	4	9
Lion City Sailors	4	2	1	1	8	5	7
Persib Bandung	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Zhejiang	4	1	0	3	2	5	3

Group G

Oct 24: Lee Man (Hkg) 0-1 Bangkok United (Tha); Tampines Rovers (Sgp) 3-3 Nam Dinh (Vie)
Nov 6: Nam Dinh (Vie) 3-2 Tampines Rovers (Sgp); Bangkok United (Tha) 4-1 Lee Man (Hkg)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bangkok United	4	3	1	0	9	3	10
Nam Dinh	4	2	2	0	8	5	8
Tampines Rovers	4	1	1	2	10	11	4
Lee Man	4	0	0	4	2	10	0

Group H

Oct 23:
Selangor (Mas) 2-1 Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (Kor); Muangthong United (Tha) 2-2 DH Cebu (Phi)
Nov 7:
Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (Kor) 1-0 Selangor (Mas); DH Cebu (Phi) 2-9 Muangthong United (Tha)

Current Standings

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeonbuk HM	4	3	0	1	12	3	9
Selangor	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Muangthong Utd	4	1	2	1	13	9	5
DH Cebu	4	0	1	3	4	18	1

BHUTAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paro (C)	18	15	2	1	81	17	47
Transport United	18	13	2	3	51	22	41
Thimphu City	18	12	3	3	50	21	39
RTC	18	9	6	3	38	26	33
Samtse	18	7	3	8	41	51	24
Tensung	18	6	4	8	24	39	22
BFF Academy U19	18	4	3	11	16	35	15
Phuntsholing Heroes	18	4	2	12	25	53	14
Tsirang	18	3	4	11	25	37	13
Daga United	18	2	1	15	23	73	7

CHINA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shanghai Port (C)	30	25	3	2	96	30	78
Shanghai Shenhua	30	24	5	1	73	20	77
Chengdu Rongcheng	30	18	5	7	65	31	59
Beijing Guoan	30	16	8	6	65	35	56
Shandong Taishan	30	13	9	8	49	40	48
Tianjin Jinmen Tiger	30	12	6	12	44	47	42
Zhejiang	30	11	5	14	55	60	38
Henan	30	9	9	12	34	39	36
Changchun Yatai	30	8	8	14	46	58	32
Qingdao West Coast	30	8	8	14	41	58	32
Wuhan Three Towns	30	8	7	15	31	44	31
Qingdao Hainiu	30	8	5	17	28	55	29
Cangzhou Mighty Lions	30	7	8	15	33	57	29
Shenzhen Peng City	30	7	8	15	29	55	29
Meizhou Hakka (R)	30	6	9	15	29	55	27
Mantong Zhiyun (R)	30	5	7	18	32	66	22

CONCACAF

UNITED STATES

Eastern Conference

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter Miami* (S)	34	22	8	4	79	49	74
Columbus Crew*	34	19	9	6	72	40	66
FC Cincinnati*	34	18	5	11	58	48	59
Orlando City*	34	15	7	12	59	50	52
Charlotte FC*	34	14	9	11	46	37	51
New York City*	34	14	8	12	54	49	50
New York RB*	34	11	14	9	55	50	47
CF Montreal	34	11	10	13	48	64	43
Atlanta United	34	10	10	14	46	49	40
D.C. United	34	10	10	14	52	70	40
Toronto FC	34	11	4	19	40	61	37
Philadelphia Union	34	9	10	15	62	55	37
Nashville SC	34	9	9	16	38	54	36
New England	34	9	4	21	37	74	31
Chicago Fire	34	7	9	18	40	62	30

Advance to MLS Cup play-offs

Western Conference

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LAFC*	34	19	7	8	63	43	64
LA Galaxy*	34	19	7	8	69	50	64
Real Salt Lake*	34	16	11	7	65	48	59
Seattle Sounders*	34	16	9	9	51	35	57
Houston Dynamo*	34	15	9	10	47	39	54
Minnesota United*	34	15	7	12	58	49	52
Colorado Rapids*	34	15	5	14	61	60	50
Vancouver Whitecaps	34	13	8	13	52	49	47
Portland Timbers	34	12	11	11	65	56	47
Austin FC	34	11	9	14	39	48	42
FC Dallas	34	11	8	15	54	56	41
St Louis City	34	8	13	13	50	63	37
Sporting KC	34	8	7	19	51	66	31
SJ Earthquakes	34	6	3	25	41	78	21

Advance to MLS Cup play-offs

Wildcard Round

Eastern Conference

Oct 22: CF Montreal 2-2 Atlanta United *(Atlanta United win 5-4 on pens)*

Western Conference

Oct 23:
Vancouver Whitecaps 5-0 Portland Timbers

2024 CENTRAL AMERICAN CUP

Play-ins

Oct 22-23: Motagua (Hon) 2-0 Aguila (Slv); Comunicaciones (Gua) 1-1 Saprissa (Crc)
Oct 29-30:
Saprissa (Crc) 3-1 Comunicaciones (Gua) (agg 4-2); Aguila (Slv) 2-2 Motagua (Hon) (agg 2-4)

Semi-finals

Oct 22-24: Antigua (Gua) 0-0 Alajuelense (Crc); Real Esteli (Nca) 0-0 Herediano (Crc)
Oct 30-31: Alajuelense (Crc) 1-0 Antigua (Gua) (agg 1-0); Herediano (Crc) 2-2 Real Esteli (Nca) (agg 2-2, *Real Esteli win on away goals*)

2024 CONCACAF CARIBBEAN CUP

Semi-finals

Oct 23-24: Real Hope (Hai) 2-3 Cibao (Dom); Moca (Dom) 0-0 Cavalier (Jam)
Oct 30-31: Cavalier (Jam) 7-0 Moca (Dom) (agg 7-0); Cibao (Dom) 1-0 Real Hope (Hai) (agg 4-2)

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John O'Shea

Manchester United v Arsenal

2008-09 Champions League, Old Trafford

John O'Shea rarely stole the limelight during his Manchester United career but when he did, it was with spectacular results. After a career that included famous winners at Highbury and Anfield, the former Republic of Ireland defender looks back on a Champions League game as his most cherished...

Vital goal...O'Shea celebrates with his team-mates after scoring v Arsenal at Old Trafford

"Playing for Manchester United was a dream for a kid growing up in Ireland, and I was lucky to be there for long enough to have a lot of games to pick from as I go for my favourite.

Some people will cynically say the most important game that I played for United was against a young Cristiano Ronaldo when we took on Sporting in a pre-season game in Lisbon back in 2003, because United signed him on the back of what he did to me that night!

I didn't enjoy it at the time, but I'm thankful that game happened because without it, everything Ronaldo achieved might have happened somewhere else.

I didn't score too many goals and such was the quality in our team during those years that when I did score a goal, Ronaldo or Wayne Rooney would tend to score a couple of amazing goals in the same match and mine would blend into the background.

The one game when that didn't happen was against Arsenal in the semi-final of the Champions League at Old Trafford in 2009. I scored the only goal of that game and had a rare taste of taking the glory.

We had won the competition the previous year and not many teams had retained it back then, so it was a massive target for us that season.

The rivalry with Arsenal was pretty intense at the time as our manager didn't always see eye-to-eye with their manager, so there was a lot resting on that match.

I remember the ball coming to me at the back post and I didn't really have enough time to react. I just had a stab at it, made a good connection and it got past their keeper, thankfully.

We came through the second leg at the Emirates Stadium before we played one of the best teams of all time in Barcelona in the final. They were amazing – Lionel Messi, Thierry Henry and Samuel Eto'o up front, so it wasn't an easy night for defenders. You come away from a match like that thinking about what might have been, but they were an amazing team.

Tough final...O'Shea attempts to tackle Lionel Messi in the final in Rome

Luckily, I finished my career with great memories playing for United, plenty of medals as well, but they are not on display in my house.

A lot of players will have a similar story. You might have a few things around the place from your career, but putting medals in frames and hanging them on the wall in your living room is not something I've ever done.

> "I scored the only goal of that game and had a rare taste of taking the glory"

Maybe it's something I will get around to one day, but the memories are all there in my mind and I'm sure one day the medals and the jerseys will be great to look back on."

Interview by Kevin Palmer

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